

THE ECOLOGICAL OTHER: INDIANS, INVALIDS, AND IMMIGRANTS IN U.S.

ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT AND LITERATURE

by

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This dissertation argues that a fundamental paradox underlies U.S. environmentalism: even as it functions as a critique of dominant social and economic practices, environmentalism simultaneously reinforces many social hierarchies, especially with regard to race, immigration, and disability, despite its claims to recognize the interdependence of human and ecological well-being. This project addresses the related questions: In what ways does environmentalism—as a code of behavioral imperatives and as a set of rhetorical strategies—ironically play a role in the exploitation of land and communities? Along what lines—class, race, ability, gender, nationality, age, and even “sense of place”—do these environmental codes and discourses delineate good and bad environmental behavior?

I contend that environmentalism emerged in part to help legitimize U.S. imperial ambitions and support racialized and patriarchal conceptions of national identity. Concern about “the environment” made anxieties about communities of color more palatable than overt racism. Furthermore, “environmentalism’s hidden attachments” to whiteness and Manifest Destiny historically aligned the movement with other repressive ideologies, such as eugenics and strict

anti-immigration. These “hidden attachments” exist today, yet few have analyzed their contemporary implications, a gap this project fills.

In three chapters, I detail nineteenth-century environmentalism’s influence on contemporary environmental thought. Each of these three illustrative chapters investigates a distinct category of environmentalism’s “ecological others”: Native Americans, people with disabilities, and undocumented immigrants. I argue that environmentalism defines these groups as “ecological others” because they are viewed as threats to nature and to the American national body politic. The first illustrative chapter analyzes Native American land claims in Leslie Marmon Silko’s 1991 novel, *Almanac of the Dead*. The second illustrative chapter examines the importance of the fit body in environmental literature and U.S. adventure culture. In the third illustrative chapter, I integrate literary analysis with geographical theories and methods to investigate national security, wilderness protection, and undocumented immigration in the borderland. In a concluding fourth chapter, I analyze works of members of the excluded groups discussed in the first three chapters to show how they transform mainstream environmentalism to bridge social justice and ecological concerns.

This dissertation contains previously published material.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION:
THE ECOLOGICAL OTHER

In the introduction to his collection of short stories *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, Sherman Alexie jokingly warns his readers that although he is Indian, the stories will not be about nature: “There might be five or six pine trees and a couple of rivers and streams, one grizzly bear and a lot of dogs, but that’s about all the flora and fauna you’re going to get” (xxii). Known for dispelling myths about Indians, Alexie is responding to what Shepard Krech has called the “ecological Indian”¹ stereotype, which assumes that Native Americans are inherently environmentalists. To his non-indigenous readers, this move signals a rejection of this myth; just because Alexie is Native American does not mean that his stories will be environmental. Native American communities, however, are disproportionately exposed to environmental problems of our day, from nuclear waste dumping and uranium mine tailings to disappearing glaciers and rising sea levels. If environmental concerns are critical to Native American communities in particular, as Winona LaDuke, Simon Ortiz, Ward Churchill, and Valerie Kuletz persuasively contend, why would Alexie distance himself from “nature”?

Alexie’s move suggests that the white stereotype of the ecological Indian in fact has little to do with nature. This seeming paradox, as well as Alexie’s impulse to signal this irony, captures the ambivalence many communities of color, including Native Americans, feel toward mainstream environmentalism. This ambivalence and how it is negotiated in environmental

¹ Shepard Krech’s book by this name created much controversy because of the essentializing tendency of this stereotype. For responses to his book and a review of the controversy, see *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian*, edited by Michael E. Harkin and David Rich Lewis.

identity politics deserves more critical attention. Native communities do have a vested interest in addressing environmental issues, but not because of an essential “closeness to the land” that mainstream environmentalism ascribes them. Reserved tribal lands contain a majority of the United States’ natural resources and have been primary sites of nuclear weapons testing and nuclear waste dumping. Native American communities have borne the costs of the state’s policies of environmental racism in ways that would suggest a natural alliance between environmentalists and Native Americans.

Despite these realities, mainstream environmentalism has often relied on the symbol of the Indian as an emblem of *healthy* human-nature relations. Thus, the movement obscures indigenous issues and Native American environmental concerns even as it uses the Indian as a symbol for its own agendas. As Alexie would put it, mainstream environmentalism cares more about a symbolic myth of pre-contact, primitive affinity between Indians and “pine trees,” “grizzly bears,” and “rivers” than contemporary indigenous environmental issues. And this nostalgic environmental ethic often pits environmentalists against Indian claims and interests, such as self-determination and land rights. Because Indians often want to do things with their land that do not fit environmentalist ideas of nature, or their expectations of Indians, these groups are more often at odds than not, contrary to the myth of the ecological Indian.

Indeed, nostalgia for an ecological Indian identity impedes mainstream environmentalism’s perception of contemporary environmental problems facing Indians, which are in part caused by the mainstream’s attachment to the stereotype Alexie rejects. Native Americans are often characterized as living in more environmentally sustainable ways than contemporary Euro-Americans, yet they are often oppressed in the name of “pristine” nature. Alexie’s rejection of the equation of “Indians” with “nature” can be understood as a reaction to the use of the “ecological Indian” for agendas that are not those of Native Americans and may even be hostile to their interests.

I argue that the use of Indian identity to advance environmental causes is a form of cultural imperialism. That is, the ecological Indian stereotype does not only appropriate Native American identity; rather, it imposes forms of identity and representation for white ends. Like the wilderness movement's erasure of Native Americans through dispossession, this stereotype ignores historical and contemporary realities in favor of white environmentalist sentiments. The stereotype actually *diminishes*, rather than authorizes, Native American agency. As Soenke Zehle observes, the ecological Indian stereotype presses indigenous communities to "appear primarily as repositories of ecospiritual alternatives" (335) and not as ecological actors in their own right. On the surface, the ecological Indian stereotype seems to support both nature and Native American interests. As Zehle adds, it also

lock[s] native peoples in immutable identities: when communities open their land to commercial development, resource extraction, or waste disposal in the pursuit of economic autonomy and self-determination only to be confronted by others who consider such acts a betrayal of their ostensible identity as spiritual ecologists, without knowledge of their desperate need for jobs and income. (335).

In this sense, ecological Indians can just as easily become "ecological others"—betrayers of nature and of white expectations of Indian identity.

The example of how mainstream environmentalism treats Indianness is only one way in which it uses "nature" to reinforce a number of dominant social hierarchies. Many scholars, in fact, are beginning to write about how environmental values, history, discourse, and images alienate minority groups from the environmental movement. For example, the wilderness model that underlies mainstream environmentalism is gendered in troubling ways. Louise Westling, Annette Kolodny, and Krista Comer, for instance, argue that the American wilderness model has long worked to feminize nature and define both women and nature as deserving to be conquered, a view that underpins much early and modern literary and cultural production. Mainstream

environmentalism, because of this historical gendering of nature and the wilderness retreat as well as the prevalence of sexism in its activist arms, is therefore unappealing to many women.

Similarly, in her study of Chicano/a environmental concerns, Priscilla Ybarra contends that Mexican-Americans and Native Americans are often suspicious of mainstream environmental causes. Ybarra argues that these marginalized groups often associate national parks and wilderness areas—iconic images of American environmental activism—with Manifest Destiny and imperialism, and do not identify them with a “proud heritage of conservation and stewardship” (2), as whites typically do. In addition, scholars such as Jeffrey Myers, Sylvia Mayer, Michael Bennett, and Melvin Dixon have shown that African-American communities are often hesitant to join environmental efforts in part because environmentalists’ aversion to the city barely disguises their racial anxieties, along with ignoring *urban* environmental issues.

As these examples suggest, environmentalism is fundamentally paradoxical: it functions as a critique of some dominant relations, especially capitalism, and yet it reinforces many social hierarchies along lines of race, class, and gender. It is because environmentalism is paradoxical that the ecological Indian can also be ecologically other; dominant perceptions of a groups’ environmental authority or lack thereof can serve to reinforce existing social inequities. Environmentalism does not just exclude groups; it often treats certain communities as “other” because their environmental ethics do not fit mainstream environmentalism’s notion of what it means to be ecologically-correct. In this dissertation, I call these groups “ecological others.” If, as Timothy Luke argues, contemporary environmentalism has created the “ecological subject”—a green consumer whose everyday economic activities play a role in deciding Earth’s fate (Kollin, 18)—then the ecological other is its antithesis. Susan Kollin hints at how an ecological other comes to be: “the loss of nature experienced by Euro-Americans often becomes directed toward the racial Other, who in turn is made responsible for that loss, becoming a target of environmentalism’s denigration and blame” (140).

What critical scholarship has thus far failed to address, though, is the identity category that I argue underlies these exclusions, distinctions, and hierarchies—disability. In this dissertation, I build on this existing critical scholarship, but add an analysis of the *corporeal* underpinning of environmentalism’s others. I argue that the figure of the disabled body is the symbol *par excellence* of humanity’s alienation from nature, and that the early wilderness movement glorified as it reified the fit body. The ideal of a healthy, physically capable, self-reliant, rugged individualist body activates environmentalism’s exclusions along lines of genetic fitness and hygienic purity. Although I explicitly focus on the disabled figure in Chapter III, the notion that a “corporeal unconscious” underpins environmentalism informs the dissertation as a whole. In each of the chapters that follow, then, I focus on three distinct case studies of ecological others—Native Americans, people with disabilities, and undocumented immigrants—with particular attention to the corporeal basis of their otherwise disparate grounds of exclusion.

This dissertation investigates a series of questions about the origins of the tension between mainstream environmentalism and groups it sees as threatening to nature. How do environmentalism’s expectations of the ecological Indian actually work against Indian interests? How does concern about “the environment” make anxieties about a variety of communities of color more palatable than overt racism, even as environmentalism claims to be a socially responsible movement with global reach, invested in issues of “interdependence,” “harmony,” and “diversity”? How does it operate to extend the U.S.’s colonial project and justify social control? In what ways does environmentalism—as a description of “nature,” as a social movement, and as a code of behavioral imperatives—play a role in the exploitation of land and communities? Along what implicit lines—class, race, ability, gender, nationality, age, and even “sense of place” (a key environmentalist term that I will examine below)—do these environmental codes distinguish between good and bad environmental behavior?

The ecological others I examine herein were defined by the early environmental movement in similar ways—as *corporeal* threats in a world of increasing immigration, travel, and urbanization. My emphasis on the shared corporeal histories of these groups is inspired by Priscilla Wald’s analysis of this same era in *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative*. Wald argues that anxieties about the healthy body around the turn of the century reflected concerns about increased contact with other people, which new forms of mobility, immigration, and travel exacerbated. The health of the nation became an epidemiological matter. In this dissertation, I extend Wald’s work on the body as carrier, especially her related formulation of the “nation as ecosystem,” in order to argue that fears of disabled, diseased, female, immigrant, or racially nonwhite people registered on a corporeal level, in part because the nation was understood in corporeal and ecosystemic—a combination Wald views as “epidemiological”—terms. That is, imagining the “nation as discrete ecosystem with its own biological as well as social connections” led to projects of “spatial organization” imparted by the “imperative of public health” (23). The Progressive Era conservation and wilderness movements were just as focused on protecting nature from the impacts of a rapidly changing “population” as they were with protecting nature from the impacts of industrialization. This moment was characterized by more bodies in tighter spaces, creating a new appreciation for public hygiene programs, but also a new appreciation for wide open spaces and wilderness.

The effect of this was that Progressive Era conservation and wilderness movements were invested in and benefitted from various projects of social control: Native conquest, immigration control, eugenics, and U.S. imperialism, as I will describe in the chapters that follow. Furthermore, since the mid-nineteenth century, mainstream environmentalism has often aligned with, even legitimized, projects of social exclusion and control. In following this historical arc of environmentalism’s investment in social control through contemporary examples of Native Americans, people with disabilities, and immigrants, this dissertation attempts to explain why a

number of minority communities resist mainstream environmentalism, even as their resistance outlines avenues of change for the movement, a point that my conclusion will elaborate.

In part, environmentalism's role in social control has been an unintended consequence of the ways environmental literature and thought construct "wilderness" and "nature": as a pristine landscape of retreat, a "safety valve" for U.S. democracy to replace the "closed" frontier, and as a place where humans could escape the stresses of modernity and industrialization. This view of wilderness became a defining feature of U.S. identity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When Frederick Jackson Turner announced the close of the frontier in 1893, protecting wilderness became one way to protect a unique American identity—an association between nation and environment that Perry Miller famously described as "nature's nation." The need for nature to serve as a "safety valve" defined the early wilderness movement and promoted American exceptionalism. As Susan Kollin observes,

Mainstream environmentalist rhetoric often advances notions of American exceptionalism, masking the nation's expansionist desires in myths of the United States as a benevolent international force, the protector of imperiled landscapes and populations alike. (11).

As such, the early environmental movement helped to legitimize Native American and Mexican land dispossession and strict anti-immigration measures between the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century. Nature—as "resource," as "wilderness," and as "safety valve"—was invoked to protect and sustain American character and national identity.

Early conservation's association with national identity provides the impetus for mainstream environmentalism's investment in social control and exclusion, as many environmental historians and ecocritics are increasingly acknowledging. This new critical movement in environmental history and ecocriticism can be attributed to the work of environmental justice scholars, such as Robert Bullard, Luke Cole, Rachel Stein, Joni Adamson,

Giovanna di Chiro, Devon Peña, and Vandana Shiva. As environmental justice scholarship shows, this historical tie between nature and nation is partly responsible for mainstream environmentalism's inability to address the issues of social justice surrounding environmental destruction. Environmental justice is concerned with the interconnections between human justice and environmental degradation, and the "places we live, work, pray, and play" as opposed to the "empty," "pristine" spaces of wilderness. Privileging wilderness protection (or "pine trees" and "grizzly bears") over social justice explains why environmentalism fails to build coalitions across lines of class, race, and even nation, gender, and ability. When Alexie tells his readers that he is not "close to nature" as they might think all Indians are, he is helping to construct an oppositional stance with regard to mainstream environmentalism. He is not close to nature the way his white readers expect him to be.

In this dissertation, I deepen the environmental justice critique of the mainstream even further. I do not merely argue that environmentalism ignores certain communities and environments. Rather, I argue that environmentalism treats certain human groups as contaminating "pure" notions of nature and nation, expressed in corporeal terms. Mainstream environmentalism often views ecological others as unenlightened, ecologically "illegitimate" (in Laura Pulido's words), or as threats to nature. Whether breaching expected myths of ecological identity or behaving in ecologically toxic ways, ecological others undermine nature itself. In this sense, they are doubly victimized; they often bear the costs of environmental injustice, as scholars have already pointed out, but they are also perceived as threats to national, racial, or corporeal "purity," providing a moral rationale for their exclusion and, in some cases, their violent oppression.

Alexie's story also signals ways in which contemporary environmentalism might redress its complicity in maintaining social hierarchies. Alexie distances his book from nature and himself from white environmentalist readers. And yet he does address environmental issues in the

text. Following the playful mode of the trickster, he says one thing and then does another, thereby drawing our attention to the contradiction. Rather than writing about his characters' essential connection to "flora and fauna," he discusses the environmental and human health costs of colonialism, capitalism, and racism on the reservation. Alexie's trickster slight-of-hand introductory move disavowing "nature" tests his readers' environmental cultural politics. It asks them to rethink mainstream concerns and white expectations of Indians. It allows his later attention to environmental justice issues to revise the mainstream, as it suggests that indigenous communities are capable of articulating their own environmental concerns and identities.

In one short story in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, called "Jesus Christ is Alive and Well on the Spokane Indian Reservation," Alexie outlines one way to understand environmental concerns as an indigenous community might define them, as opposed to how a white reader might want to define them for Native Americans. The 1974 World's Fair in Spokane provides the context for Alexie to contrast mainstream and environmental justice environmentalisms. The story hints at why Native American writers and scholars resist close association with environmentalism, even when they address environmental issues in their work. White visitors to the Fair capture Alexie's critique of mainstream environmentalism. They enjoy one of the Fair exhibits of a statue of an Indian that, when triggered by the push of a button, voices a clichéd ecological message: "we have to take care of the earth because it is our mother" (129). This message reflects the emerging ecological sensibility of the 1970s environmental movement, which looked to Native Americans as pre-modern people who co-existed harmoniously with nature. Native American identities were portrayed as inherently environmentalist, evoking a pre-industrial golden age of harmony between humans and nature.

Ironically, though, the myth of the "benign" ecological Indian—as represented by the statue—could only emerge once Native Americans had been conquered by Anglo-European colonialists. Renato Rosaldo explains this seeming paradox in terms of what he calls "imperialist

nostalgia”: a sense of longing and desire for that which is conquered, which the process of conquering paradoxically engenders. Indians were seen as a mortal threat to white civilization, which called for their violent destruction and displacement while imagining the “west” as uninhabited—as a “frontier” destined for conquest. U.S. expansion had both environmental and human costs, and, as both nature and Indians were viewed as “vanishing,” they both became fetishized “others.” This nostalgia fuses them together as one symbol of a lost way of life. As Kollin describes it, “the colonizer’s nostalgia for an authentic Indian belatedly tries to call back a lost world that it had earlier banished.” In turn, it is important to recognize that any “return to the authentic ‘native’ is a return to an origin already invented by the colonizer” (141). Thus, appreciation for a pre-modern native-land harmony is only possible within the context of conquest of western lands and of Native Americans. In sum, colonialism produced the ecological Indian.

Even as they erase this history of conquest, the World’s Fair statue and its message mark this erasure. The statue itself reflects imperialist nostalgia for an ecological Indian myth. It reflects its white audience members’ preference for this myth, which is located in the past and therefore better represented by a “dead” statue than a live Indian. Meanwhile, Indians have not vanished, despite the message the statue is meant to convey. They are living in the land in close proximity to the Fair, where the very colonial processes that the Fair celebrates—expansion, exceptionalism, settlement, growth—have damaged the land and undermine the local Indian community. Alexie juxtaposes the statue and the Fair scene with a real-life Indian and real-time scene: James, an Indian character, comments on the river behind the Fair, where he “knows something more” has happened: uranium deposits from mining on Indian land (to make weapons for the U.S. military) have polluted the water. The (white) spectators prefer the myth of a vanished “noble savage” and its attendant myth of humanity’s harmonious relationship to nature to the real, present environmental issues of the Spokane Indian community. The spectators do not

want to know about the environmental concerns Indians would define for themselves in present time. The artifice of the Fair assures their denial about what has really happened to the landscape and the people that the Fair presumes to glorify. Looking beyond the statue would involve white culpability and expose the imperialist and military agendas of U.S. expansion, thereby undermining the narrative of progress that the Fair commemorates.

This story also underlines another environmental justice criticism of mainstream environmentalism. In its attention to a *global* sense of environmental harmony (as exemplified by the “World Fair” and reference to “mother earth”), it ignores *local* concerns. The Fair celebrates U.S. power and advancement, and also portrays mainstream environmentalists as smugly confident of their own good intentions and global vision, while they ignore the polluted land that stays there even after the Fair moves on. This contrast between local and global scales of environmental representation has implications for social justice. A problem environmental justice scholars identify with mainstream environmentalism is that it often emphasizes the global scale of environmental problems (climate change, biodiversity “hotspots,” the depleting ozone layer) at the expense of local concerns, where people without political or economic power experience them daily.² James’ environmental concern is the local river on the reservation, while the statue is concerned about a global environment—“mother earth.”

Alexie’s contrast between the statue and James reflects in fictional form the environmental concerns that Native American scholarship addresses: the troubling trope of the vanished Indian, which the statue symbolizes; the authority of traditional ecological knowledges

² Environmental justice scholarship is divided about the efficacy of “local” versus “global” as scales through which to understand and address injustices. Ursula Heise concisely summarizes these debates in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. In sum, neither global nor local scales of understanding environmental problems is inherently more just than the other. Questions of social justice emerge more clearly in analyses of the *rhetorical uses* of these scalar analogies. All environmental problems are simultaneously global and local (the binary is false), and how communities perceive and combat environmental problems as local or global is more a political strategy than it is an actual account of geographical space. I expand on the relevance of these “geographical imaginaries” in the section on “geography” below.

and epistemologies over “expert” ecological science and white nature aesthetics (as James’ knowledge of “something more” implies); and the sacrifice of Native American identity and land in the name of protecting “mother earth,” U.S. nation-building, and national security. Alexie’s story illustrates the problems with mainstream environmentalism: it puts the preservation of wilderness and wildlife over the preservation of tribal communities, even as it nostalgically uses Indians as symbols of a more ecological past. And Alexie hints that this seeming contradiction is a result of the imperialist project of Manifest Destiny.

My dissertation draws on and extends this important work on the intersections of “whiteness and wilderness,” the sexism of dominant environmental thought, and the ways environmental distinctions and disgust “produce” environmental risks and their solutions. As they mobilize people to behave environmentally, they also delineate who doesn’t fit. My contention is that this delineation is not just a matter of preference or politics. It is a matter of racism, ableism, or other ideological exclusion, masked as environmental enlightenment. I situate the origins of environmentalism within the legacy of American exceptionalism beginning in the mid-nineteenth century in order to illuminate what is at stake in the contemporary cases I study in each chapter. The early wilderness and ecology movements deployed ideals of American national identity and American “nature” to justify social exclusion on the bases of physical and mental ability, race, and national origin. In this sense, environmental values and discourses of “nature” gained meaning within the context of social engineering projects to purify the nation.

My goal is to present the idea of the overarching ecological other and outline how it reveals environmentalism’s investments in white and ableist privilege. I agree with Pulido’s assessment that environmentalism is “a form of racism that both underlies and is distinct from institutional and overt racism.” This assessment helps explain what seems a paradox: that environmentalism espouses social and ecological harmony, yet it reinforces many social hierarchies. Because environmentalism promotes several “goods,” including resistance to the

devastation of the environment in the names of growth and development, it is easily exonerated of its “bads.” Pulido suggests that it actually works in tandem with white privilege. Drawing on George Lipsitz’s formulation of the “possessive investment in whiteness,” Pulido describes the way white privilege operates: “[m]ost white people do not see themselves as having malicious intentions [... and can therefore] exonerate themselves of all racist tendencies” (15). Environmentalism’s moral high-ground makes its racist, sexist, nativist, and ableist tendencies less visible; indeed, they are certainly not “institutional” or overt. It is precisely its “possessive investment in whiteness”—and, I want to add, in *abled-bodiedness*—that makes its exclusionary tendencies difficult to detect.

I provide evidence here that these tendencies are examples of what Peter Stallybrass and Allon White call “poetics and politics of transgression.” Environmental discourse delineates between ecologically correct and incorrect values and behaviors in ways that establish moral hierarchies. Environmentalism’s “poetics and politics” create what Pierre Bourdieu calls “distinctions” that signal who belongs and who does not. Environmentalist disgust of ecological others’ behaviors acts like Stallybrass and White’s “bourgeois disgust” and Pierre Bourdieu’s “distinctions”; discourses and habits of taste, disgust, and hygiene, for example, define environmental correctness. Mary Douglas’ perceptive arguments about purity, pollution, and environmental “risk” help elucidate my point. She argues that the fact that “the environment” is even on the cultural radar as a problem or “risk” deserves closer scrutiny from a social justice perspective. Environmental concerns must be analyzed to see how their framing of issues and proposed solutions reflect, reinforce, or alter “distribution of power in relation” to the environmental problem. If society “produces its own selected view of the natural environment” that “influences its choice of dangers worth attention” (Douglas, 8), then environmental “problems” are socially constructed and knowledge about them is “produced.” Further, if people in power “would use risks to nature to get other people to change their ways” (14), then “the

environment” is as much a disciplining discourse as it is a material object. My formulation of the “ecological other” relies on Douglas’ argument: those in power are not only in charge of defining the environmental risks, but also in delineating who are “risks to nature.” These definitions are “essentially social rather than scientific” (ibid.). It is with these very social—discursive, historical, and constructed—ways that environmentalism constructs “risks” posed by ecological others that this dissertation is concerned.

I enlist Michel Foucault’s theory of biopower to help explain how a constellation of disparate projects—eugenics, strict anti-immigration policies and sentiments, and conservation—grow out of one imperative: the discipline and improvement of an American population. Foucault’s theory exposes connections between disparate moments of the Progressive Era: the continued fortification of the U.S.-Mexico border, the emergence of the science of ecology, Social Darwinism, immigration restriction, the establishment of wilderness parks, and Native American dispossession. I argue that all of these moments are part of one biopolitical ethos that rationalized U.S. attempts to establish identity on two seemingly unrelated scales: the individual body and the national body politic. Following Donna Haraway and Jake Kosek, who have shown how conservation, eugenics, and anti-immigrationism all served the same nation-building agenda, I want to bring these historical moments together in ways they have not yet been viewed. I argue that these historical moments shaped the construction of multiple subjectivities: the disabled body, the “illegal alien,” and the “ecological Indian.” These subjectivities share a common connection to the early environmental movement, a connection that continues to inform the movement today.

Environmentalism’s historical “others” have not always remained silent on the issue of their exclusion. They challenge environmentalists and environmental studies scholars to attend to the ways Native Americans, Chicano/as, and people with disabilities, among others, have related to nature. They also raise uncomfortable questions about the ways mainstream environmentalism

has been complicit in colonialist, patriarchal, and exploitative capitalist projects. In my dissertation's concluding chapter, I explore these responses. How do the ecological others I outlined in Chapters II, III, and IV craft an alternative vision of human-ecological health? And how do these groups gain what Laura Pulido calls "ecological legitimacy" to assert their own claims? In order to not perpetuate the silencing or appropriation of ecological others' voices, this chapter attempts to answer the question: how do ecological others define their own environmental identities and concerns? This discussion is similar to ongoing debates within feminist, postcolonial, and indigenous studies, whereby it is not sufficient to simply "add" the voices of ecological others into a mainstream dialogue. Rather, as I want to show in my conclusion, like Alexie's trickster treatment of nature, these responses suggest a retooling of the fundamental premises of a mainstream environmentalism that creates the very problems it ostensibly seeks to solve.

Critical Contexts

Environmental Justice

This project draws on and extends environmental justice developments in the fields of ecocriticism, American studies, environmental and New Western history, and geography. In what follows, I describe the ways in which environmental justice is distinguished from mainstream environmentalism, and then address the environmental justice contributions to these specific fields. Although the differences between mainstream and environmental justice environmentalisms are not always clearly defined, for the sake of developing the foundational argument of this project, I will outline some of the major criticisms of the mainstream movement leveled by work in "environmental justice" (EJ).³

³ Environmental justice shares much with other movements, such as ecofeminism and what Pulido calls "subaltern environmentalism." "Subaltern environmentalism" is embedded in material power relations and

Just as mainstream environmentalism emphasizes the domination and exploitation of the ‘natural world’ over that of many human communities, it also ignores the environments in which underprivileged communities live. One of EJ’s primary contributions, then, is to insist that what contaminates nature also contaminates its inhabitants. And environmental degradation is often a function of access and power. The industries that degrade the environment of inner cities and reservations undermine the bodily health and quality of life of their laborers and inhabitants, who routinely are denied access to the spaces where decisions are made.

Another critique is that mainstream environmentalism constructs environmental problems “as if the human community were uniform, without great differences in culture and experience, without differences in power or access to material influence” (Anthony qtd. in Chase, 352). By including all communities under the category of “human species,” deep ecology, for instance, ignores the uneven racial, gendered, and other power structures that shape the relations of different groups to the environment. The universal category “human” creates an “indifference to difference” and makes “multinational corporations and American Indians, members of wealthy countries and those from less powerful groups” (Kollin, 139) all equally responsible for the globe’s environmental problems. One effect of this “whitewashing” is that differences are overlooked in the name of a universal good, which is protected by an elite class of eco-managers authorized to make environmental decisions for all of us (di Chiro “Beyond,” 205). This “new ‘green imperialism’ thus finds moral cover for itself,” such that “whale campaigns” can become “forces contributing to Alaska Native dispossession and displacement” (Kollin 139), for instance.

implicates issues of identity (see *Environmentalism and Economic Justice*). I see my project as more in line with environmental justice because it is less monolithic than either ecofeminism or the notion of a “subaltern” identity assume. I prefer “environmental justice” also because it includes concerns of gender and the postcolonial subject, but offers a more structural critique without assuming any particular identity, place, nation, class, or gender (although the term “subaltern” may be useful for describing certain resistance communities, such as Native Americans, who arguably exist in a colonial relation to the U.S.).

A related criticism is that mainstream environmentalism privileges a view of nature conceived of as “outside” the realm of everyday human activity. It values pristine nature, often seeking to identify and preserve “biodiversity hotspots” on a global scale, such as the Amazon rainforest. The attempt to “save” natural wonders follows the wilderness preservation model that has been dominant in the United States. Mainstream environmental groups often advocate preserving lands it deems valuable at the expense of “sacrifice zones,” such as reservations and inner cities where Native Americans and poor, often black residents are unable to fight displacement. What distinguishes these two kinds of “environments” is a question of social justice: whose environment is “preserved,” and for what purposes? EJ therefore includes environments that are not “pristine,” such as city centers and abandoned factory sites. As Lawrence Buell argues, the influence of environmental justice on the field of ecocriticism suggests:

All ‘environments’ in practice involve[e] fusions of ‘natural’ and ‘constructed’ elements. This is evident in the field’s increasingly heterogeneous foci, especially its increasing engagements with metropolitan and/or toxified landscapes and with issues of environmental equity. (Buell, *Future*, viii).

EJ has thus drawn attention to “not-in-my-backyard” ideology (known as NIMBY-ism) and environmental racism, which ensure that the most toxic environments are those in which the residents cannot defend their interests. EJ rejects the notion that the inner city is a frightening, toxic “wilderness” whose inhabitants do not care about nature or their own environments (and can therefore be understood as ecologically other to the mainstream).⁴ Thus, EJ insists that any descriptions, analyses, and solutions to environmental crises be examined in terms of their

⁴ See Giovanna di Chiro’s “Sustaining the ‘Urban Forest’ and Creating Landscapes of Hope” and Michael Bennett and David Teague’s *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments*.

“heroes” and “villains,” and the power structures that inform their relationship to their environments.

Ecocriticism

Ecological others are constructed by environmental narratives. Narratives not only disseminate information, Priscilla Wald observes; they also “promote or mitigate the stigmatizing of individuals, groups, populations, locales (regional and global), behaviors, and lifestyles, and they change economies” (7). Environmental literary and cultural narratives have material impacts. My project draws on and extends the field of ecocriticism by attending to the ways in which literary and cultural narratives produce meaning and affect policies, environments, and lives. Developing in the 1960s and 1970s in support of the reemerging environmental movement, the field of ecocriticism looked for ways that literature conveys environmental ethics. American environmentalism has looked to Anglo representations of nature for its inspiration, such as the writings of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Edward Abbey. These canonical environmental texts convey sublime responses to natural wonders and disparage humanity’s treatment of the earth. Authors such as Emerson, Thoreau, George Perkins Marsh, John Muir, and Walt Whitman, for example, were concerned with the environmental impacts of industrialization and expansion, and their works marked a critical moment in nineteenth-century writing. Their contribution informs a long tradition of nature writers in the North American context, including Mary Austin, Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, Gary Snyder, and Annie Dillard, for instance.

Early ecocriticism focused on these canonical environmental authors who glorified the individual retreat into the “pristine” space of nature, where the sins of industrialization and anthropocentrism could be redeemed. This “pastoral” theme pervades much nature writing and ecocritical scholarship. As ecocriticism became more critical of itself, feminist ecocritics, for example, argued that this genre and even the pastoral mode are gendered. Some of these authors

enacted what Carolyn Merchant calls “the recovery narrative”: wilderness provided a prelapsarian setting to which a man could escape the toxic (feminine) influences of society, as well as his own complicity in producing this toxicity. Retreating to the wilderness was not just spatial, it was temporal; one could return to a prelapsarian space of innocence. Krista Comer calls this “the wilderness plot”; environmental texts use wilderness as a trope to move the action and moral message of a text. Nature became a masculine space at a moment when urbanization and industrialization led to a “crisis of masculinity.” Men regained their masculinity through the wilderness plot that pervades so much of this genre of nature writing, even, many feminists argue, when the writing is by female authors.

As environmental justice ecocritics have also begun to show, drawing especially on Native American studies and New Western history, this traditional (white, male) nature writing genre ignores the fact that non-whites lived in and reflected upon the very same landscapes. The wilderness plot is not only gendered, it is racialized as well. Beginning in the 1990s, ecocriticism and environmental studies began calling for greater diversity and recognized that the study of the environment and environmental literature had been overwhelmingly dominated by whites and white perspectives. In the 1999 *PMLA* “Forum on Literatures of the Environment,” contributors noted the Anglo-centricity of ecocriticism. Since then, greater attention has been paid to non-white representations of nature, which has not simply increased the amount of nonwhite voices, but expanded beyond the genre of nonfiction nature writing and redefined what counts as “environmental” in literature. In other words, “adding more voices” into the canon did not solve the problem. Writings of nonwhite writers and their accounts of nature and their environments did not always resonate with the genre, aesthetics, and politics of traditional environmental literature studies. As a result, what “counted” as an environmental text itself challenged the very terms of the field. Recognizing that a definition of “environment” that only includes wilderness or a limited conception of “nature” is exclusionary and distorted, environmental literature is beginning

to include representations of urban spaces, borderlands, toxic places, the home, the body, landscapes of resistance, transnational and other views of the “environment” that account for a broader range of human-nonhuman interactions.

These developments in ecocriticism are also associated with the influence of environmental justice, and recognize that the disenfranchised—communities of color, women, and children, for instance—are disproportionately burdened with the costs of environmental degradation and may even be blamed for it. While the mainstream environmental movement and ecocriticism seek greater input from these communities, the communities themselves are often hesitant to join mainstream environmentalists or to value environmental scholarship, aware that their voices are not being heard. Sylvia Mayer notes that the fact that American environmentalism is “preoccupied with notions of wilderness and wildlife preservation explains the mistrust black people have harbored toward long-established environmental organizations” (2). Priscilla Ybarra confirms that this exists in Chicano/a studies as well: “Chicano/a studies do not yet relate the natural environment to their priorities in social justice and cultural heritage” (2). The combination of being so long viewed as “closer to nature”—whether in negative terms as “backward” or in positive terms as “noble savages”—and having their social and cultural agendas overridden in the name of “the environment” has led Native American, African-American, and Latino/a communities to distrust environmental activists and academics.

On the one hand, American environmental literature has criticized and rejected urbanization and industrialization, and especially the environmental destruction that accompanied western expansion. At the same time, these views have “fail[ed] to locate people of color anywhere at all in the western drama” (Comer, 42), or only do so through the nostalgic tropes of essentialism and a vanished race (of Indians or Mexicans). People of color thus only figure in the western drama as absent, foreign, vanishing, or objects of conquest. Environmental writers consistently ignore this legacy and repeat this erasure of people of color from the wildernesses

they describe. For example, Muir and Abbey refer to the presence of non-whites in the wildernesses of the Sierras and the southwest respectively as “immigrants” or “foreigners,” suggesting nonwhites do not belong in these places. This sense of Anglo entitlement to wilderness fails to acknowledge the historical and literary presence of nonwhites in these “natural” spaces of the wilderness that these authors were “discovering” and writing about. In this “the wilderness plot,” mainstream environmentalism is a narrative of America’s “limitlessness, expansiveness, fresh ‘virginity,’ optimism, awesomeness, grandeur, a space of forever receding horizons,” and a “patriotic landscape powerfully implicated in colonialist rhetorics and ideologies” (Comer, 203).

Even as American environmental cultural production has been critical in some ways of the ecological consequences of capitalism and expansion, it has also contributed to the frontier and pastoral views of nature that have made these processes possible. Returning to Alexie’s story, his context of the U.S. exhibition in a World’s Fair highlights the relationship between mainstream environmentalism and U.S. empire. Alexie’s Indian statue at the Fair embodies this relationship, as the Fair is intended to define “America” to its domestic audience as well as foreign visitors, and to commemorate Westward exploration. The statue’s mainstream environmental message reinforces American exceptionalism even as it gestures toward a universal human identity, all sharing “mother earth.”

In the chapters that follow, I elaborate on these EJ developments in ecocriticism, in part by analyzing how environmentalism has historically treated a variety of groups as “ecologically other” on the grounds of race, gender, ability, nationality, and environmental behavior. If ecocriticism and environmentalism expect to make common cause with diverse groups, they will need to more deeply understand their role in causing this distrust. Therefore, I not only attempt to explain some causes of this distrust; I explore how ecologically-other communities articulate their own environmental concerns and revise mainstream conceptions.

American Studies

The field of American Studies has become increasingly critical of American exceptionalism and the frontier myth. American Studies provides a foundation for my dissertation because it allows me to focus on the extent to which ideas of nature are related to ideas of the nation and to the U.S.'s sense of itself in a globalizing world. American Studies has traced these relationships. Early American Studies works, such as Leo Marx's *Machine in the Garden* and Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land*, articulated the symbolic role of the frontier in American cultural production. More recently, "new American Studies" scholars interrogate the role of colonialism in forming American identity. The "metaphysics of Indian-hating" and the role of violence in defining American identity and territory are increasingly under scrutiny, as ethnic studies and postcolonial studies challenge the homogeneity, cohesion, and "territorial trap" implied by a solitary field of "American" Studies. With influences from border theorists, transnational and postcolonial theorists, geographers, and Ethnic Studies scholars, the notion of a seamless American nation and a monolithic American identity are changing the field's directions and modes of inquiry.

One "new American Studies" scholar, Amy Kaplan, has argued that American Studies needs to foreground rather than deny the "multiple histories of continental and overseas expansion, conquest, conflict, and resistance which have shaped the cultures of the United States and the cultures of those it has dominated within and beyond its geopolitical boundaries" (4). Kaplan's call for greater emphasis on what environmental historian Patricia Limerick calls America's "legacy of conquest" is central to my project, particularly in terms of how "national mythologies of white settler societies are deeply spatialized stories" (Razack, 74), a point that I will return to in the section below on geography. In this dissertation, I add to the American studies and geography scholarship the argument that ideas of "the environment" and environmentalism as a movement were central to this legacy of conquest and assimilation.

Indeed, such an analysis seems necessary if, as ecocritic David Mazel argues, “what we today call environmentalism is generally understood to have had its beginnings in [...] a time and a region that place it directly upon the heels of imperial conquest” (144). The emergence of an environmental movement “on the heels of imperial conquest” suggests a relationship between these projects. My work therefore attempts to fulfill Kaplan’s call for greater attention to the “imperial unconscious of national identity.” I do this by arguing that these imperialist processes were and continue to be distinctly *environmental*.

My analysis of environmentalism’s relationship to this new definition of the American nation and identity intervenes in this new wave of critical American Studies scholarship. Several contemporary American Studies scholars emphasize that the originary myths of American exceptionalism and pastoralism articulated by de Tocqueville, Crèvecoeur, and Jefferson, among others, legitimized the displacement and oppression of “others” including Native Americans and slaves. Another seminal formulation, Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 frontier thesis, delivered as an often-quoted speech to the American Historical Association during the Chicago World’s Fair, lamented the end of the expansionist era of American history in which American identity was forged in the “wilderness” (ignoring the fact that it was actually inhabited by indigenous peoples). Once the wilderness had been fully settled, Americans thereafter would no longer share the experiences through which their collective identity had been formed. The frontier thesis suggested that American character could only be guaranteed by the conquest of more territory, an extension of the expansionist process historian Richard Slotkin calls “regeneration through violence.” The frontier thesis also inaugurated a renewed interest in the pastoral retreat into “pristine” nature, as expressed in the wilderness movement of the Progressive Era, and influenced founding American Studies theorists such as Perry Miller, Henry Nash Smith, and Roderick Nash, to argue for the value of wilderness to “the American mind,” in Nash’s terms. Thus, this new American Studies scholarship provides the context for my argument that environmentalism

has advanced various forms of social oppression in part through its connection with dominant formulations of the wilderness myth.

These more recent developments in American Studies provide a foundation for my theorization of environmentalism's ecological others as implicated in the ongoing re-creation of national identity. Informed by a legacy of distinctly American rugged (white, male) individualism, environmental thought can serve as a dangerous cover for reactionary politics as it points out who has transgressed nature, and, by extension, America. These orientalizing distinctions will ultimately undermine the effectiveness of environmentalism as a social movement in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Environmental History: Conservation as Social Control

New Western historians have joined the new American Studies and other related scholarship in recognizing that environmental and colonialist practices have been historically intertwined. Wilderness preservation "protected" land from people whose rights the white majority wanted to deny, promoting an image of America that systematically justified the dispossession of Native Americans and Mexicans from lands across the West.⁵ The construction of wilderness parks went hand in hand with imperial expansion. Following the logic of imperialist nostalgia, the development of the frontier was accompanied by nostalgia for wilderness, and so cordoning off spaces to conserve was a direct function of settling the frontier. The "construction" of wildernesses throughout the West coincided with the dispossession and displacement of Mexicans, and the confinement of Indians (many of whom had been repeatedly displaced as white settlers moved west) to reservations in the latter half of the nineteenth century were part of the same nation-building project. Thus, the latter half of the nineteenth century not

⁵ See Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* and Patricia Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, for example.

only saw the first national parks; it also witnessed unprecedented appropriation of tribal lands, as well as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) and the Gadsden Purchase (1853), which dramatically shifted the western American landscape and Americans' image of "their" country.

In this context, the idea of wilderness conservation first began to take shape. The first national park, Yellowstone National Park, institutionalized the wilderness model in 1872, and the drive for wilderness preservation then continued until the 1930s under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, John Muir, and the landscape design of Frederick Law Olmstead. Environmental historians like William Cronon, Mark Spence, Carolyn Merchant, Patricia Limerick, and others have argued that the wilderness model's insistence that nature be "pristine" created an image of wilderness as a place "where man himself is a visitor who does not remain,"⁶ and rendered wilderness accessible only to the privileged. In Ybarra's view, this model continues to deter people of color from participating in the mainstream environmental movement, as it "erases the ongoing relationship with nature that people of color maintained [with the so-called wilderness] for centuries before the establishment of the United States and westward expansion" (3). It also erases the legacy of conquest that creating wilderness spaces facilitated.

In addition, the social context of the construction of "wilderness" helps explain its cultural purposes. At the end of the nineteenth century, several seemingly disparate social "crises" emerged. The rapid growth of cities brought problems of overcrowding and disease, and was marked by an unprecedented influx of new immigrants, many who were Catholic or Jewish from Southern and Eastern Europe, who were perceived as inferior and unclean. Immigrants, workers, and women were demanding rights and public space in a nation that had lost its safety valve with the close of the frontier. This led to a series of perceived crises of masculinity, nature, and national identity. Urbanization, unprecedented European and Asian immigration,

⁶ This language from the Wilderness Act of 1964 institutionalized a division between spaces where humans work and inhabit and spaces where nature belongs and humans can only visit.

industrialization, and changing labor, racial, and gender relations all threatened to undermine the images of freedom and masculine ideals of independence that had been central to American identity, and to thwart the “progress” that became the dominant intellectual and political current of the era. These crises inspired public hygiene reforms, immigration restriction, and environmental protection, among other measures of what Eric Hobsbawm has called the “age of reform.”

The Progressive Era wilderness movement helped to artificially replace the frontier by “constructing,” to use William Cronon’s term, the concept of wilderness. Protecting wilderness was not the only response to the change in American identity brought by the closed frontier, but wilderness demarcation kept people out, in contrast to the earlier notion of a frontier that needed to be (re)populated (by Anglo-Americans). Social reform policies, including immigration restriction, urban reform and design, and early eugenics, helped assuage the pressures of immigration, urbanization, and the close of the frontier. These approaches promised to protect both the safety valve of the frontier and the genetic purity an American race. Recently, environmental historians have come to recognize that the beginnings of environmental protection did not occur in a vacuum, but were closely linked to other social reforms of the time. “The first expressions of protectionist sentiment about vanishing woods and wilderness on the part of the dominant settler culture,” Lawrence Buell argues, “coincided with the first intensive systematic push toward urban ‘sanitary’ reform” (8). The urban hygiene efforts of Jane Addams and the preservationism of John Muir were twin parts of the same utopian impulse of the Progressive Era, nation-building “age of reform.”

But environmental justice critics view Progressive Era utopianism with more skepticism than pride. They see the invention of “wilderness” as a reactionary *response*—as opposed to a *solution*—to these social crises. Progressive Era social reform movements were often led by individuals such as Theodore Roosevelt and Charles Davenport, for instance, who sought to

engineer an ideal society, socially harmonious and free of social deviants and groups thought to threaten America's image of itself, which linked moral purity to whiteness, cleanliness, and reform politics. Darwinian evolutionary theory legitimated white domination, but also white *noblesse oblige* in combining welfarist policies, government regulations, and newly imposed limits on immigration. The nature and purpose of wilderness helped rationalize these policies as appropriate, "progressive," and "natural."

In this context, evolutionary theory was deployed to legitimize these ideas, and "nature" was a justification for social control through increasingly popularized views of Darwinian thought. Spencer's interpretation of Darwinian theory naturalized the Anglo-American race's inevitable superiority in a "survival of the fittest." The idea of "nature" as "wilderness" then became a surrogate safety valve for the pressures fomenting in society. Immigration policies between the 1880s and 1920s increasingly fortified borders and legalized exclusions, first against the Chinese, but then against other groups, with the explicit intention of preserving the genetic and cultural purity of the Anglo population in order to avoid "race suicide." The environment thus gave troubling social reform policies moral legitimacy in an era marked by progressive politics, and concerns about the political and economic rights of African-Americans, workers, and women.

Several scholars, such as Jake Kosek and Peter Coates, have identified these connections between Progressive Era environmentalism and early-twentieth-century immigration policies. But few if any scholars have yet linked the Social Darwinist fear of race suicide to the social construction of "disability" as a genetic threat to the nation, much less acknowledged how this construction was underwritten by the much more acceptable goal of "conservation." Scholars of disability theory argue that disability is a "social construction" that emerged during the late-nineteenth century, as methods of quantifying and standardizing the human population became strategies of social reform. For the first time, an idea of a "normal," "average," or, sometimes, "ideal," body shaped these projects of health, fitness, self-reliance, productivity, and American

progress. Further, in the Progressive Era, disability could be the responsibility, if not fault, of the *individual*. It was during this period when what disability theorists call “the medical model” of disability framed disability as a pathology, difference, and threat to the population.

What happens when we map this historical “construction” of disability alongside the “construction” of wilderness, and see them not just as *parallel*, but as *related* phenomena? I suggest here that they converged to support an emerging sense of a fit, pure national identity. As much as “the national mythologies of white settler societies are deeply spatialized stories” (Razack, 74), they are corporeal as well. That is, the wilderness provided the necessary backdrop to the “Rough Rider” image promoted by Roosevelt and his contemporaries. The physically fit, self-sufficient man, capable of living a “strenuous life,” was the American ideal, the opposite of which was physical disability. As Gail Bederman notes, Roosevelt’s “strenuous life” was a fantasy of raw masculine identity endangered by a feminizing—and, I add, *disabling*—modern society.

If modern urban life was feminizing and disabling, wilderness spaces provided the correct counter-geography in which to hone the ideal American male body. Rescuing this masculinity involved mythologizing the past (“wresting the continent from Indians and installing a higher civilization” (Bederman, 182)), but also, as Bryant Simon attests, maintaining a fit and healthy body and testing it in the “new frontiers” of Cuba, Panama, and the Philippines. Here, we begin to see how biopolitics united projects of individual bodily disciplines and geopolitics. In his support for conservation, Roosevelt headed West to recover his own masculinity, which was, by his and others’ definitions, genetically superior and physically fit. As a result, Simon argues, “national glory, wide-open spaces, and powerful bodies were [...] forever linked” (84). Thus, protecting nature’s nation involved deploying “the environment” both *spatially*—through the construction of wilderness areas—and *corporeally*—in the service of sculpting the race and territory into an American national body politic. Without being overtly racist and under the

auspices of the new “science” of ecology, environmental views distinguished between those who belonged within America’s privileged boundaries and those who threatened its superior “nature”—understood both as physical “wilderness” and as the “essential identity” of the national body politic.

Given this context, it is not surprising that many of the same figures who were developing the science of ecology and promoting the wilderness movement were the earliest proponents of eugenics. It seems paradoxical that the early tradition of the American ecology wilderness movements, promulgated by Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman (whose names are associated with values of social acceptance and harmony with nature), should share views of “nature” with Ernst Haeckel, George Perkins Marsh, and Roosevelt, all strident advocates of racial and genetic purity. This sharing of ecological and eugenic philosophies suggests that environmentalism’s apparently transcendent “structure of feeling” is firmly grounded in a notion of national purity, a position that requires the construction of “ecological others” to justify its politics of exclusion. Thus, a historical framework linking the constructions of disability, wilderness, and a Progressive Era national identity provides a crucial context for my analyses of how contemporary environmentalism treats “others” today.

Early environmentalism’s role in meliorating Progressive Era social problems provides a crucial historical perspective for my argument that environmental thought is complicit in, if not responsible for, many of the very social injustices it claims to address. Connections between environmentalism and discourses of fear and policies of social control continue to influence environmentalism today, yet few have analyzed their contemporary implications with regard to how environmentalism becomes a form of social control by “othering” groups perceived as threats. Environmentalism continues to draw on and perpetuate ideas of nature that reinforce racial and social hierarchies. Thus, white masculinity—and also *able-bodiedness*, as I show in

this dissertation—were the barely submerged subtexts of conservation and an emerging environmental politics in the Progressive Era.

Geography

Critical human geography also offers insights into my analyses of ecological others that mainstream environmental history and literary analysis do not. One of the primary reasons for this is that much of the environmental treatment of Indians, immigrants, and invalids is rooted in ideological views of what counts as an ecological “sense of place.” A “wide variety of environmentalist perspectives [...] emphasize a sense of place as a basic prerequisite for environmental awareness and activism” (33), Ursula Heise observes. A hierarchy of senses of place accounts for a certain amount of the exclusion of environmentalism’s others: “place continues to function as one of the most important categories through which American environmentalists articulate what it means to be ecologically aware and ethically responsible today” (29). Critically examining the discourses of place, space, and landscape in environmental literature from a geographical perspective is therefore central to my interest in how environmental discourses draw lines between insiders and outsiders. These lines are not just figurative; they are literal, which is why I enlist geographical theories and methods to elucidate these representations. Following David Harvey, I want to be aware of the ways that “spatial and ecological differences are not only *constituted by* but *constitutive of* [...] socio-ecological and political-economic processes” (6). Many ecocritics fail to attend to the ways in which spatial and ecological conditions are products of geographical, political, economic and social processes.

The concept of “landscape” is a contested key term for geographers, and recent theorizations of the term are also central to understanding each chapter’s treatment of ecological others. In each chapter, the texts I analyze treat landscape in a variety of ways, and convey spatial implications of delineating and ordering ecological others. Furthermore, I broaden my literary

methodology of close readings of texts in Chapter IV to include a physical landscape itself as a text that can be “read” in terms of how it draws lines between ecological insiders and outsiders. The “place” and “text” of my investigation in Chapter IV is Organ Pipe Monument in Arizona, a U.S.-Mexico border landscape where issues of the environment, national identity and security, and social justice converge. The geographical dimension of “landscape” contributes to my environmental justice understanding of the issues here. I take as a beginning premise the critical views of Denis Cosgrove, Gillian Rose, Don Mitchell, and Krista Comer, who discuss a variety of ways in which landscape and landscape representations carry unacknowledged ideological baggage that often erases the human politics of labor, gender, and power that occur in those landscapes. A critical geographical awareness of representations of place, space, and landscape can materialize the otherwise abstract processes of history, economics, and culture and reveal the broader interpretive networks in which places and landscapes are embedded.

For example, Krista Comer shows the process by which wilderness areas, which are the landscapes of concern for this project, are “natural spaces” that, “when mapped by human minds, not only reflect human social organization but, as representational systems, participate in both the construction and maintenance of every kind of racial, gender, class, sexual, regional, and nationalist relationship imaginable” (12). Along with attention to these themes and categories, scholars at the intersection of geography and disability studies, such as Michael Dorn, Rob Imrie, and Brennan Gleeson “read” landscapes for their assumptions about what kinds of bodies belong in them. From this perspective, we might view wilderness landscapes as *designed* to be inaccessible because the wilderness model requires that the retreat to nature be a physical challenge. Finally, conventional landscape studies view landscape as “art,” thereby reinforcing the distance between the viewer and the viewed, making it easier to ignore the implicit text, to see the Indian statue instead of the polluted river, to reference Alexie’s example. “Landscape” also privileges sight or vision as the primary epistemological sense; by “framing” an environment,

landscape representations are by definition partial and exclusionary. Like the wilderness ideal, landscapes are usually cleansed of human presence, evidence of industrial processes, or urban blight. Critical landscape studies attempt to “unhide the hidden” and expose these ideological assumptions of the concept of “landscape.”

Like place, the ideological assumptions underlying “landscape” operate to support or to resist the status quo. For example, a wilderness landscape, despite drawing attention to itself as “natural,” is embedded in geographical, social, and historical processes, and “assumes certain social characteristics once it is administered by the state or redesigned for visitors and tourists” (Thacker, 17). Krista Comer notes that “one group of landscape representations might further [...] heroic white history,” whereas another group of representations might “question that dominant history, reveal its internal contradictions” and offer very different “conceptualization[s] of ‘landscape’ and human relationships to one another and to nonhuman nature” (12). Representations of landscape vie to normalize competing narratives of place, invoking varying conceptions of nature and nation in these contests. As I will discuss in the conclusion, for example, landscape practices can also inform a “a resistant politics [that] can in fact be tied to particularized place without capitulating to nostalgia or antimodernism [...] or to violent, exclusivist claims to place-belonging [...] without, in short, turning one’s back on the world” (Comer, 15).

I build on these geographical insights about the constructed landscapes of wilderness in my critique of the wilderness model, particularly in my analyses of “mobility” and “access” (physical and legal) to the imaginative space of the nation in Chapters III and IV on disability and immigration, respectively. As Comer observes, while the “dominant geocultural imaginary emplots normative western spaces in ‘open,’ free, uncontained terms,” “these terms belong to the realm of the official and the public, which unmistakably are gendered male and racialized white.” “For who else” besides those gendered male and racialized white, she asks, “exercises the spatial

prerogatives implied by ‘openness’? To whom belongs a visual ideology of the panoramic” (27)? Environmental conceptions of place and landscape can be deployed for exclusionary purposes when they create norms about what kinds of behavior in places and landscapes are ecologically-correct. These environmental “distinctions,” to use Bourdieu’s term, help define the ecological other and reify the bounds of “nature’s nation.” Attention to the spatial dimensions of environmental texts allows us to begin to recognize the bases for and resistances to these exclusions.

The concepts of “sense of place” and “rootedness” are central to both environmental literary analysis and geographical theory, and my analysis contributes to the debates within these fields about the role of “place” in environmental ethics. Drawing on geographer Doreen Massey, I begin with the perhaps counterintuitive premise that a sense of place does not in itself guarantee ecological correctness. The image of pristine nature discussed earlier can become a “reactionary isolationism” in the mainstream environmental “sense of place.” Rather than accepting “sense of place” as morally virtuous at all times and in all places, as many ecocritics and environmental writers do, Massey’s “power geometry” of place accounts for the unevenness of human agency in relation to place. Massey’s concept of the “power geometry” of place better accounts for the socio-ecological and political-economic process Harvey wants us to acknowledge. She asks, “what is it that determines our degrees of mobility, that influences the sense we have of space and place” (qtd. in Cresswell, 64)? What kinds of “senses of place” do migrants, nomads, refugees, or, I would add, people with disabilities, have? How does gender, class, or race influence mobility or ability to stay rooted in a place? Massey’s theory of power geometry accommodates mobility:

Different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely who moves

and who doesn't, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement. ("A Global," 149).

Thus, the point is not "sense of place," but rather power in relation to place and to one's stasis or movement.

It is crucial for an environmental justice perspective of place not to privilege any one kind of relationship to place in favor of another; I resist the argument that the nomad, for instance, "represents a subject position that offers an idealized model of movement based on perpetual displacement" (Kaplan, 66), as much as I avoid the notion that "identities are formed through an attachment to a specific site—national, cultural, gender, ethnic, class, sexual, and so on" (25). Although they are different, both of these arguments assume a definition of place as static. In contrast, Massey contends that place should not be understood as static or bounded, but rather as a layering of networks of many places, situated spatially in a web of political, economic, and ecological forces. Against the conventional geographical and environmental wisdom that space is abstract, dynamic, and historical, while place is "location, being, dwelling" (Thacker, 13), Massey argues that this distinction between space and place corresponds to other troubling dualisms: local/global, real/abstract, specific/universal, female/male, constraint/agency, and even emotion/reason (*For Space*, 184). This thinking creates what she calls a "Russian-doll geography of ethics, care and responsibility: from home, to local place, to nation" (186), as well as a view that "place is the victim of globalization" (101). These views, often taken up by environmentalists and nativists alike, commit "spatial fetishism, assuming a politics from a geography" (103).

Environmentalism deploys both of these views of place to demonize various communities' behavior in the precious and preserved places of wilderness. Massey argues for a "progressive sense of place" that recognizes that understandings of place as only "fixed" or only "dynamic" are often deployed for reactionary purposes. A progressive sense of place refuses

either “global openness” or “local self-containment” (“Power,” 178) as the only options available to the geographical imagination. A “progressive” sense of place in Massey’s formulation takes seriously “the relational construction of space” and places as “criss-crossing in the wider power-geometries that constitute both themselves and ‘the global’” (101). The conventional notion of a sense of place is ideologically restrictive, and privileges those who have power over their own mobility. Recognizing the “power geometry” of different peoples’ relations to place is one way that geographers contribute a critical, social-justice perspective to environmental criticism. Building on hers and other geographers’ theories of space, place, and landscape, I hope to disentangle environmentalism from reactionary, exclusionary views of “sense of place” in order to highlight the possibilities of place in world of mobile people, economies, and ecologies.

Dissertation Chapters

To further establish how the themes of this dissertation are linked, I begin in Chapter II with an examination of the relationship between environmentalism and colonialism in Leslie Marmon Silko’s 1991 novel, *Almanac of the Dead*. An apocalyptic narrative of colonialism in the Americas that predicts indigenous revolution and the return of stolen land, *Almanac* scrutinizes global histories of imperialism and capitalism. It exposes the “legacy of conquest” of the Americas and criticizes contemporary capitalist manifestations of racist, sexist, and ableist colonial practices and ideologies. *Almanac* also describes the environmental costs of colonialism and capitalism, but, as I argue in this chapter, Silko’s treatment of environmentalism seems contradictory. Although the novel focuses on the environmental justice costs of colonial capitalism, it is far more critical of environmentalism for its complicity in these structures. Like Alexie, that is, Silko distances Native American identity from mainstream environmentalism, even as she outlines environmental concerns of indigenous communities. Silko’s ambivalent treatment of environmentalism—as potentially both an ally and an enemy of indigenous

sovereignty and justice—sets the stage for the remaining chapters. I argue that rather than simply uniting environmental and social justice concerns, as many scholars argue the novel does, Silko is suspicious of environmentalism’s links to eugenics and imperialism, even as she ultimately forecasts resistance based on shared destruction of land and indigenous communities by a common threat: colonial-capitalism.

Further, Silko’s treatment of environmental concerns only seems ambivalent if we are limited in how we understand what counts as an environmental concern. Silko’s “environmentalism” might be at odds with mainstream environmentalism, but *Almanac* is nonetheless attentive to ecological issues. This may seem a paradox and hint at why Silko seems ambivalent about the mainstream, even as she addresses ecological concerns throughout the text. But I argue in this chapter that *Almanac* offers a revised definition of environmental concerns in terms of issues of land, sovereignty, and an ethics of reciprocation, instead of the wilderness model of mainstream environmentalism. Beginning with *Almanac*’s approach, I expand on this revision in my conclusion.

Chapters III and IV examine two categories of ecological others—the figures of the disabled body and the undocumented immigrant. Examples of environmentalism’s ecological others abound, but these two examples powerfully demonstrate how environmentalism’s legacy of nativism and association with projects of disciplining bio-politics manifest themselves in contemporary environmental debates. In Chapter III, “‘Maimed away from Mother Earth’: The Disabled Body in Environmental Thought and Literature,” I look at the figure of the disabled body in environmental literature and contemporary U.S. adventure culture. I outline historical parallels between the wilderness movement, Progressive Era notions of the fit and ideal American body, and the construction of “disability” as a category. It is no coincidence that bodily fitness became the sign of “natural” superiority in the early twentieth century, as wilderness preservation and social reform movements were also gaining force. Scholars working in the field of disability

studies show how disability became the category of “otherness” against which the ideal, productive and healthy American was defined. But neither environmental nor disability scholars have scrutinized the way in which environmental literature and thought still sees the disabled body as alienated from nature and therefore as the consummate ecological other.

This chapter addresses this lacuna by demonstrating how mainstream environmentalism’s recreational practice—adventure culture—extends early twentieth-century conceptions of Social Darwinism in its focus on “fitness,” self-sufficiency, and purity. I argue that if the wilderness encounter tests and hones the “fit” body, and if alienation from nature is understood as alienation from our own bodies—both notions that originated in Progressive Era environmental thought—then reconnecting with nature means having a fit body. In this chapter, I show how this environmental attachment to the fit body manifests in contemporary American adventure culture, and how the disabled body literally embodies environmental crisis in modern environmental cultural discourse. I examine contemporary expressions of adventure culture, such as advertisements and other outdoor adventure materials, in terms of how they treat and reify the fit body. I also analyze contemporary environmental psychology and philosophy, which look to practices of the body to reconnect to nature. In these examples, technology and modernity have numbed and “blinded” us to the world around us, undermining our ability to craft an embodied environmental ethic. Finally, I examine how the figure of the disabled person informs quintessentially “environmental” literary texts; in works by Melville, Wallace Stegner, and Edward Abbey, for instance, the disabled body literally embodies humanity’s alienation from nature. In these literary examples, disability serves as a “narrative prosthesis” to make a point about modernity’s environmental crisis. These cultural, philosophical, and literary texts all seem to argue the same thing: the crisis of nature is a crisis of the body, and recovering our connection to nature not only requires getting “out” into it, but disciplining the body away from its reliance on technology and the “crutches” of society. Drawing on the work of disability theorists such as

Susan Wendell and Rosemarie Garland Thomson, Donna Haraway's theory of the "cyborg," Deleuze and Guattari's theory of "becoming," geographers' analyses of "spaces of exclusion," and my historical analysis of the relationship between conservation and eugenics, I argue that contemporary environmental thought continues to treat the disabled body as a sign of our environmental crisis—it is ecologically other.

Environmental metaphors with roots in the Progressive Era are also used today to suggest that certain bodies "pollute" the national body politic, creating national "insecurity." In Chapter IV, "The Poetics of Trash: Immigrants in the Borderland Wilderness," I discuss how the historical relationships between immigration, national security, racial purity, and environmental thought are being reproduced in contemporary U.S. politics and literature. Enlisting geographical methods of analysis, this chapter is based on a case study of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument on the Mexico-Arizona border. The borderland in and around Organ Pipe is contested since it is situated along a contested border and is adjacent to the Tohono O'odham Indian Reservation on one side and Barry Goldwater Military Range on another. Thus, in her book on the monument, Carol Ann Bassett writes that Organ Pipe Monument is a "place of edges." The chapter examines how the environmental consequences of undocumented activity in the desert wildernesses are portrayed, and the links between environmentalism and the militarization of the border. Anti-immigrant rhetoric about the impact of migrants on the desert landscape constitutes what I call a "poetics of trash," a catalogue of wastes and traces—stains on the pristine landscape that make visible the passage of undocumented bodies through the borderland and feed the dominant view that the border is in "environmental crisis." Although that discourse portrays migrants as a biological invasion of "native" (Anglo) land, it is as much about preserving the racial and cultural purity of the national body politic as it is about ecological stability. It distracts attention from the economic and political causes of migration, suggesting the need for defensive measures to "keep them out" and police the borders rather than human solutions to the economic

pressures that cause migration. By presenting and relating the historical, geographical, political, and discursive contexts bearing on this landscape, it is possible to better understand—and thereby imagine solutions to—the humanitarian and environmental “crisis” along the border.

My concluding chapter, “Can the Ecological Other Speak?: Resisting and Revising Environmentalism,” considers alternative conceptions of environmentalism and the potential they carry to transform mainstream thought and activism. Invoking Spivak’s similar question, “can the subaltern speak?”, I investigate how environmentalism’s excluded others negotiate environmental concerns within and outside of the mainstream debates. I follow Laura Pulido’s notion that because environmentalism is tied to colonialism, we might consider its “others” as “subalterns” who work both against and with the dominant environmental tools. I thus conclude by investigating the possibilities of what Pulido calls “subaltern environmentalism.” In contrast to the mainstream assumption that there is one ideal environmentalism toward which the whole world ought to aspire, there are multiple ways to be environmental; most important, that these differences are linked to identity politics more broadly. If, as Alexander Hunt contends, “in cultural differences inhere different environmental philosophies of place and of human responsibility to that place and its nonhuman denizens” (59), then there are many environmentalisms. How can environmentalists and ecocritics not simply make room for these differences, but rather revise environmentalism’s ethics and projects to ensure that these interests have a solid ground on which to speak? What would environmentalisms of ecological others look like? Following Mei Mei Evans, this chapter seeks to address the question, “What kinds of perspectives might narratives created by and about socially identified U.S. American Others—that is, those who are not male, and/or not white and/or not straight”—and, I would add, “and/or not able-bodied or foreign-born”—“as they seek to engage with nature offer us as both the role of nature and one’s role in society” (183)?

Literary texts perform a crucial role in imagining alternatives to mainstream environmentalism. In this final chapter, I demonstrate this by exploring several key moments in a variety of texts by groups I have already outlined as “other” to mainstream environmentalism that signal fissures in mainstream ideology and provide opportunities for revision. Similar to the seemingly contradictory ways in which Alexie and Silko treat environmentalism in the texts already described, this chapter examines a text by an author with cerebral palsy, Eli Clare’s memoir *Exile and Pride*, and a text written by a Chicana, Ana Castillo’s *So Far from God*, in order to propose a number of non-mainstream examples of environmental identity. Clare’s attention to disability engages him directly with my discussion of the “disablist presence” in environmental thought in Chapter III, and so Clare’s critique of ableist society provides a rare engagement between disability literature and environmentalism. He also addresses the intersections of disability, gender, and sexuality, which provide yet another retooling of environmental identity politics to consider. Castillo’s novel is particularly revealing in other ways as well. Her treatment of environmental concerns in the *mestiza* community of her novel not only provides an environmental justice revision of the mainstream, but she complicates the relationship between these two approaches. Finally, to demonstrate the relevance of these texts to contemporary environmental politics, I discuss a contemporary activist coalition I analyzed in Chapter IV, the Coalition to Bring Down the Wall. This Coalition is an example of political activism that put social justice at the center of its agenda. Recognizing that the ecological problems of immigration require not defensive measures, but rather a major reform of immigration policies at the federal level, the Coalition successfully acted against building a wall, despite disapproval by many mainstream environmentalists. The Coalition demonstrated its acknowledgement that environmental and social justice issues are structurally related despite conflicting identity politics, a fundamental tenet of the environmental justice texts examined thus far in my work.

Despite the challenges of “speaking for” others whose interests have been excluded from mainstream environmentalism, this dissertation nonetheless concludes with these textual and activist counter-theories and counter-praxes. These revisions create the conditions in which ecological others can determine their own environmental agendas from both within and outside of the mainstream. In the end, the aims of this project are threefold: 1) to clarify some causes of the tension between mainstream and environmental justice agendas; 2) to indict environmentalism for its complicity in exacerbating this tension through its continued construction of ecological others; and 3) to revise mainstream environmentalism to acknowledge the interests of those multiple “ecological subjectivities” whose environmentalisms may or may not always be clear to or align with the mainstream. What is at stake in such an investigation is the viability of environmental justice on a warming and globalizing planet, in which fear of environmental crisis and contamination become *carte blanche* for the exclusion and exploitation of those deemed “other.”

CHAPTER II
 COLONIALISM, INDIGENEITY, AND ENVIRONMENTALISM
 IN LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S *ALMANAC OF THE DEAD*

Introduction

Early in Leslie Marmon Silko's 1991 novel, *Almanac of the Dead*, twin mix-blood Native Americans Zeta and Lecha learn about their family history. Their Yaqui grandmother, Yoeme, describes her marriage to their grandfather, Guzman, a descendent of Spanish colonialists. The arrangement was strategic: "Why do you think I was married to him? For fun? For love? Hah! To watch, to make sure he kept his side of the agreement." Guzman's side of the agreement was to protect Yoeme's people's land from further appropriation by white people. Yoeme "was married to him" (by arrangement) to help protect her people's land. But despite this position of leverage, Guzman's complicity in colonial projects leads Yoeme to leave him. She describes the moment she left, which was precipitated by a "fight involving big cottonwood trees":

The fucker Guzman, your grandfather, sure loved trees. They were cottonwoods got as saplings from the banks of the Rio Yaqui. Slaves carried them hundreds of miles. The heat was terrible. All water went to the mules or to the saplings. The slaves were only allowed to press their lips to the wet rags around the tree roots. After they were planted at the mines and even here by this house, there were slaves who did nothing but carry water to those trees. 'What beauties!' Guzman used to say. By then they had no more 'slaves.' They simply had Indians who worked like slaves but got even less than slaves had in the old days. The trees were huge by the time your mother was born. (116).

Confused about the relationship between Guzman's love of trees and the separation of their grandparents, Zeta and Lecha ask, "But why did you fight over the trees?" Yoeme switches directions in her response, which is no longer about trees: "They had been killing Indians right and left. It was war! It was white men coming to find more silver, to steal more Indian land. It was white men coming with their pieces of paper! To make their big ranches." Yoeme informs Zeta and Lecha of the colonial context of her marriage to Guzman, in which a "war" was causing the slaughter of her people and the theft of their land. As part of her story about the transport and maintenance of the trees themselves, Yoeme's description of the war connects Guzman's love of trees to the conquest of Native Americans and their land. Indeed, as they listen to Yoeme's story, Zeta and Lecha keep getting confused about whether Yoeme left "because of the trees" or because "Guzman hated Indians" (116, 117). Their confusion underscores Yoeme's point: the two reasons are related.

I open with this story from *Almanac* because it concisely establishes the concerns of this chapter—the relationship between colonialism, Indian historiography, and colonial attitudes toward the environment. Guzman's hatred of Indians and his love of cottonwood trees are intermingled in this story. Colonialism is violence against slaves (black and Indian), against land, and against nature—and these forms of violence are related. Zeta and Lecha's confusion about whether Yoeme left Guzman because of his racism or because of the seemingly trivial, unrelated issue of "trees" suggests that Guzman's imperialism includes both racism and a "love of trees." But Guzman's love of trees is a paradox: his landscape aesthetic, which requires the trees to create a setting in which Guzman feels comfortable and powerful, is not really about nature. Imperialist affection for "nature" is often characterized precisely by attempts to convert landscapes of colonized lands into the image of the garden that the New World promised. "Virgin land" *requires* colonial settlement to convert it into "the garden." His "love of trees" and his use of slaves to transport and plant them epitomize colonial landscape aesthetics. Guzman's

ambition to impose a more verdant landscape on the existing desert landscape reflect his imperialist environmental sensibilities; he simultaneously controls and appreciates nature, but only an aesthetic and domesticated version of it that the cottonwood trees, imported from elsewhere, illustrate. Guzman's love of trees is strictly aesthetic and instrumental—what we might term “eco-colonialist.” Just as the colonial conceit justifies extracting Native American peoples from their land for utilitarian purposes—slavery and territorial acquisition—so too does eco-colonialism design artificial landscapes in the name of loving nature. Guzman's mastery over his slaves corresponds to his mastery over the landscape.

In contrast to the eco-colonial aesthetic that justifies extracting cottonwood trees from their context in the name of “love,” Yoeme outlines a view of nature that values the cottonwood trees' role within a broader cultural system. She articulates the Yaqui understanding of the trees' relationship with their environment and her people: “the cottonwood suckles like a baby. Suckles on the mother water running under the ground. A cottonwood will talk to the mother water and tell her what human beings are doing. Then those white men came and they began digging up the cottonwoods and moving them here and there for a terrible purpose” (117). This contrast between colonialist environmental values and indigenous environmental values allows Silko to distinguish indigenous environmental concerns from those of colonialism and even to suggest that “environmental” values *support* colonialist ideologies about landscape and race. Indeed, Guzman's planting of the cottonwood trees does not simply serve the “terrible purpose” of imposing a colonialist vision on the desert, exploiting slave labor, and tearing the trees from their place in indigenous cosmology. The trees serve the “terrible purpose” of the ultimate act of violence—the lynching of Yoeme's clansmen (118). Guzman's “love of trees” is an aesthetic expression of a distinctly imperialist irony: the use of “nature”—*literally* in the form of the cottonwood trees themselves, and *symbolically* in the form of importing a colonial landscape on

an incompatible environment—to steal land, exploit the environment, and remove Indians from the garden of the New World.

This story also signals the centrality of the body as the site of these terrible purposes in *Almanac*. Silko's critique of the paradox of eco-colonial values registers at the level of the body: it was the labor of black and Indian slaves' *bodies* that was extracted in order to impose an artificial landscape on the land. The cottonwoods that resulted from this *corporeal* labor are in turn used to lynch the bodies of the slaves that grew and tended them. The corporeal violence of colonialism is fundamentally related to its treatment of the land and nature. Silko is only able to convey the paradox of colonialism's violent "love of trees" through her description of Indians' *bodies*: similar to natural resources, they are simultaneously the raw material from which colonialism was built and on which it enacts conquest. Thus, this story distills *Almanac*'s critique of the link between colonialism and environmentalism, as well as how this link operates as corporeal conquest, critiques that I explore in this chapter.

While primarily a novel about indigenous justice (the return of land to indigenous peoples), environmental justice scholars have counted the novel in the "canon" of environmental justice literature because it also scrutinizes the relationship between indigenous and environmental exploitation. The novel explores the dual oppression of both the environment and Native Americans under colonial-capitalism; as one critic argues, *Almanac* shows that "oppressions and exploitation of people and land are inextricably linked" (Kang, 737). But I would suggest that this conventional environmental justice reading of *Almanac* does not sufficiently address the novel's critique of colonial-capitalism, and thereby misses its central project of indigenous claims to and understanding of "land." Merely highlighting the ways in which the novel shows parallels between social oppression and environmental degradation—how the oppression of land and people is "inextricably linked"—does not do justice to the novel's environmental justice contribution. It leaves conventional views of "the environment" intact, and

ignores how these views are entangled in the very colonial apparatus that causes this dual oppression of land and people, as Guzman illustrates.

A closer reading thus suggests an unexplored contradiction: environmental concerns pervade the text, yet Silko frequently frames environmentalists as colonialists, as the character Guzman demonstrates. This chapter examines how this contradiction functions to provide a much more trenchant critique of environmentalism and colonialism than conventional readings allow. I argue that it is precisely the novel's seemingly contradictory approach to questions of the environment that renders its environmental justice contribution that much greater. Given Silko's challenges to the colonialist investments of environmentalism, any reading of the novel as "environmental" that fails to register Silko's ambivalence ignores the revision to environmentalism that the novel's call for indigenous justice necessitates.

In order to make this argument and illustrate how the novel establishes what is at stake in the remaining chapters of the dissertation, this chapter addresses a set of interrelated questions: how does the novel depict colonial conquest and indigenous justice? What discursive roles do conceptions of "land," "nature," and "the environment" play in Silko's view of conquest *and* in her vision of justice? In what ways do environmentalist agendas *diverge from*, just as much as they may support, indigenous justice? To what extent does this divergence result from environmentalism's investments in colonialism, and how does environmentalism support social control, according to the novel? I contend that *Almanac* illustrates how environmentalism can both support and thwart social justice, and that environmental discourses accomplish the latter by treating colonialism's "others" as *ecological* others. Silko's ambivalence toward environmentalism is a call to identify the ways in which environmentalism and environmental terms are embroiled in the very oppressions they claim to eschew.

The Novel's Central Concerns: Conquest, Land, Revolution, History

Almanac of the Dead describes colonial history in the Americas, insists that the “Indian wars” have not ceased, and forecasts indigenous revolution. It criticizes the colonial conquest of the Americas and its continued manifestations in global capitalism, which acts as a modern form of imperialism and extends colonial conquest. The novel counters the dominant national mythology that America is not an imperialist nation and that its era of expansion is over, a mythology Razack articulates well: “A quintessential feature of white settler mythologies is [...] the disavowal of conquest, genocide, slavery, and the exploitation of the labour of peoples of colour” (74). Against this narrative, *Almanac* demonstrates that the U.S.’s conquest of Native Americans is in fact imperialist and violent, and that modern capitalist structures perpetuate these relations today. Continued theft and destruction of land, police brutality, broken treaties, ongoing military campaigns in the Americas, and capitalist exploitation of labor continue to oppress indigenous communities in order to secure and maintain the power of the dominant order.

The central problem in *Almanac* is U.S. colonial appropriation of Native American land. Affirming Edward Said’s point that “imperialism is an act of geographical violence,” the novel shows that colonialism entails land dispossession, displacement, forced settlement, as well as enslavement, rape, torture, and murder. Colonialism attempts to erase indigenous language, culture, and religion. Colonialism has criminalized and condemned Native American rituals and oral tradition; it has dismissed Native American views of time, animism, intergenerationality, and the existence of multiple worlds as lacking any basis in reality, and substituted individualism for communalism. Colonial-capitalism continues to exploit and marginalize Native Americans economically, as well as through legal coercion, sexual abuse, political corruption, and the denial of Indian land claims. And on the occasion that Native American history, oral tradition, and cultural practices are recognized, colonial-capitalism also commodifies them.

The colonial-capitalist structure is not only a political-economic apparatus of oppression; it is patriarchal and racist. *Almanac* depicts these patriarchal and racist agendas as ends in themselves, not just as the social forms these structures happen to take. Silko conceives of this combination of racism and sexism as a generalized force of destruction, and calls the people through whom this force operates “the Destroyers.” Destroyers are typically European and male, but the destroyer force can work through anyone who puts short-term self-advancement above a longer view of communal indigenous justice. It is expressed as greed and fear of others, and supports white, patriarchal, exploitative social relations. Most evident in European cultures, the Destroyer force is characterized by an instrumentalist orientation toward others and toward the physical world; as individualism, and as linear temporality that privileges the present and future over the past. It facilitates the appropriation, standardization, commodification, and desacralization of the physical world.

Almanac advances the claim that challenging contemporary colonial-capitalism requires a simultaneous revision of U.S. history, opposition to Destroyer cultural forms that persist in the present, and an act of justice: the return of tribal lands of the Americas to the indigenous. History and land are inextricably linked in the novel. If colonialism is a geographical act, then the first (but not last) step toward justice begins with “nothing less than the return of all tribal lands,” as Silko states. Her “five hundred year map” that opens the novel establishes what is at stake: “the Indian Wars have never ended in the Americas.” Indigenous justice will require a revolution and a return of land to the indigenous peoples of the Americas. One way that Silko’s five hundred map initiates these critiques is through its form. If mapping is a tool of conquest, articulating an epistemology of place that naturalizes the dispossession of its inhabitants, then Silko’s use of a map is in ideological resistance to the colonial cartographic tradition. We might understand Silko’s map as an attempt to “unmap,” as Sherene Razack explains:

Just as mapping colonized lands enabled Europeans to imagine and legally claim that they had discovered and therefore owned the lands of the ‘New World,’ unmapping is intended to undermine the idea of white settler innocence [...] and to uncover the ideologies and practices of conquest and domination. (75).

The novel represents Native American reclamation of land through the very form of representation that made land theft possible—a map. The revolution will occur not just through force, war, or laws; rather, it will also be a revolution of ideology, representation, and values, starting with a map—the first inscription of imperialism’s “geographical act of violence.” Like the novel, the map suggests the need to revise “all things European,” with particular attention to the material impacts of remembering, telling, and recognizing the past—historiography. The novel challenges how history is “told by the winners,” as well as the way Western historiography treats history as a dead past, as opposed to immanent in the present and future. The novel’s ideological remapping supports its geographical remapping; it represents space on the map and in the narrative to support indigenous repossession of land.

In its insistence on revising dominant narratives of history as well as how history is told, *Almanac* dispels the linear and progressive narrative of Western expansion. Like historian Patricia Limerick’s call for recognition of America’s “legacy of conquest” and American studies scholar Amy Kaplan’s assessment that imperialism shapes U.S. nationalism and identity, Silko’s recasting of U.S. history emphasizes the subjugation of peoples and lands in the name of Western civilization. The novel accomplishes this rereading by reframing the “discovery” and subsequent “civilizing” of the Americas by Columbus and European colonialists in terms of the indigenous and African conquest, oppression, slavery, and injustices these processes involved. The legacy of conquest counters the dominant historiography that teleologically naturalizes the settlement of the Americas. *Almanac* provides alternative stories that counter the glorification and inevitability of these founding narratives and expose the social injustices on which they are built.

The militant African-American character Clinton distills *Almanac*'s emphasis on historiography. He delineates between white and nonwhite narratives of history: "To read the white man's version, Africans were responsible for the plantation slavery in the New World. But African slaves only replaced the Native American slaves, who died by the thousands" (406). We can also see this revision of the progress narrative in *Almanac*'s critique of the Catholic Church's "civilizing" efforts in the Southwest:

Zeta wondered if the priests who told the people smuggling was stealing had also told them how they were to feed themselves now that all the fertile land along the rivers had been stolen by white men. Where were the priest and his Catholic Church when the federal soldiers used Yaqui babies for target practice? Stealing from the 'government'? What 'government' was that? [...] How could one steal if the government itself was the worst thief? (133).

In this passage, missionaries and government officials view indigenous people as prone to "stealing." But Zeta's version recasts these institutions as the thieves, and suggests that the dominant view ignores conditions that made Indians desperate enough to "steal" in the first place: the original theft of indigenous lands committed by U.S. governments. The passage also points to the fact that this original theft was made possible by the conflict between Native American and European notions of "property."

Zeta's version of history reinterprets "expansion" as conquest and theft, and throughout the novel, Silko details various forms of European theft and betrayal:

The whites came into these territories. Arizona. New Mexico. They came in and where the Spanish-speaking people had courts and elected officials, the *americanos* came in and set up their own courts—all in English. They went around looking at all the best land and where the good water was. Then they filed quiet title suits. Only a few people bothered to find out what the papers in English were talking about. After all, the people had land

grants and deeds from the king of Spain. The people believed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo protected their rights. They couldn't conceive of any way they could lose land their people had always held. (213).

In contrast to the dominant narrative about the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which hides the violence that led to it and portrays land acquisition by the *americanos* as fair and consensual, the above rendition insists that the *americanos* denied land rights that the indigenous had been granted during the colonial period by the King of Spain. When the region became "American," these land grants were ignored and denied, with the help of *discursive* forms of power—"quiet title suits" and "papers in English." The importance of acknowledging the violence and betrayal of colonial history is emphasized throughout the novel. It is so important that at one point in the novel, indigenous revolutionaries punish a Cuban Marxist comrade, Bartolomeo, with death for "crimes against tribal histories." Such is the gravity of the transgression. Indeed, because it will initiate revolution, bringing tribal histories to the fore is the most urgent goal of the novel: "History was the sacred text. The most complete history was the most powerful force" (316).

Angelita, an indigenous revolutionary, interprets Marx in a way that underscores the importance of remembering history through stories: "This man Marx had understood that the stories or 'histories' are sacred; that within 'history' reside relentless forces, powerful spirits, vengeful, relentlessly seeking justice" (316). Story-telling brings the past to life in the present, undermining the distinction between the two in the process. Stories

are alive with the energy words generate. Word by word, the stories of suffering, injury, and death had transformed the present moment, seizing listeners' or readers' imaginations so that for an instant, they were present and felt the suffering of sisters and brother long past. The words of the stories filled rooms with an immense energy that aroused the living with fierce passion and determination for justice. (520).

Stories are animate; they have literal force. The constant, dynamic interaction of the past with the present drives the future toward indigenous justice. “Remembering,” through the process of bringing stories to life, is not about being nostalgic for a golden age of indigenous harmony or sovereignty; on the contrary, it is about “determination for justice” in the future. Stories had “power to move millions of people” (521). Everyone “must reckon with the past because within it lay seeds of the present and future” (311). The indigenous insistence on remembering is in contrast to the way that “for hundreds of years white men had been telling the people of the Americas to forget the past” (431). American pop-psychology magazines tell the Native American character Sterling to solve his “depression,” which is caused by his exile from his tribal land and community, by forgetting the past: “whatever has happened to you had already happened and can’t be changed. Spilled milk” (24). And the black broadcaster Clinton’s consciousness-raising radio programs retell stories to instigate revolution: “If the people knew their history, they would realize they must rise up” (431). Remembering necessitates rising up, and history dictates the future: “History would catch up with the white man whether the Indians did anything or not” (431).

The novel thus asks, given tribal histories of conquest and resistance, how can indigenous justice be served? Extending and revising Marxism’s tenet that revolution by workers against capitalism is inevitable, the novel forecasts an indigenous revolution against colonial powers. The novel replaces the American progress narrative, which states that *colonial conquest* was inevitable, with an indigenous narrative that *revolution* is inevitable. It does so in part by recording the forces of resistance to colonialism in the Americas and on the African continent. In telling history from the position of the conquered, *Almanac* reveals the legacy of conquest; the record of resistance challenges European colonial narratives and the inevitability and rightfulness of Manifest Destiny. These accounts inform marginalized communities of their own history, highlighting both the legacy of conquest *and* resistance to conquest by colonialism’s “others.”

For example, the African-American militant Clinton provides radio broadcasts in which he lists all of the overlooked historical moments when blacks fought, rebelled against, and resisted domination. And Angelita gives a speech that recalls all the historical moments of indigenous resistance to colonial conquest. Silko interjects lists of historical dates and descriptions of resistance throughout the novel, disrupting the narrative's flow and reminding readers that the novel itself is an almanac of sorts—a collection of records and forecasts that resist the ordering logic of narrative. These records of resistance reveal the ways that the indigenous of the Americas variously resisted, fought, integrated, assimilated, and negotiated conquest. By illuminating the historical precedence of resistance undertaken by various communities of color, the novel portrays oppression as a collective history of courage. And these records of resistance show that conquest is neither inevitable nor complete. They prove that colonial-capitalism has had and continues to have weaknesses that can be exploited.

These records in *Almanac* suggest that disparate groups share a collective interest in revolution that did not exist before colonial-capitalism. But despite the shared experience of oppression and exploitation by the Destroyers, the revolution will be led by indigenous groups focused on retaking the land, since the novel defines their original oppression as the basis of all other forms of oppression. The forces of colonial-capitalism impact all vulnerable groups, and imperialism manifests in a variety of ways, but its primary focus is the colonization of *Native Americans* and their *land*. Although *Almanac* critiques all forms of dominance as inherently originating in one Destroyer source, Silko articulates justice from a Native American perspective. This collective indigenous identity is based on land; even if different tribes “could agree on nothing else, they could all agree the land was theirs. Tribal rivalries and even intervillage boundary disputes often focused on land lost to the European invaders” (518). Even tribal infighting is the result of shared dispossession. In other words, this point of convergence does not equal sameness. Rather, it marks the existence and identity of Destroyer forces. The prophecies

that will initiate revolution are *indigenous* prophecies, and the revolution will be led by *indigenous* groups, represented by a set of indigenous twins who mobilize indigenous revolutionaries from Mexico and other Central American countries.

Almanac announces the signs of revolution, as classical and Biblical texts would, by environmental omens. They are

all around them—great upheavals of the earth that cracked open mountains and crushed man-made walls. Great winds would flatten houses, and floods driven by great winds would drown thousands. All of man’s computers and ‘high technology’ could do nothing in the face of the earth’s power. (425).

The land is the means and the end of revolution: indigenous leaders will “simply wait for the earth’s natural forces already set loose, the exploding fierce energy of all the dead slaves and dead ancestors haunting the Americas” (518). To Silko, the earth is not a justification for revolution, as it is in mainstream environmentalism. Rather, it literally *causes* it. Once harnessed by white men for exploitation and profit, now the forces of nature and the spirits that animate them will revolt. Already, “electricity no longer obeyed the white man. [...] The great serpent was in charge of electricity. The macaws were in charge of fire” (512). Revolution involves nature resisting technological dominance—beginning with the quintessential technology associated with primordial humanity, fire— and returning to an indigenous cosmological order.

The indigenous movement will be joined by disenfranchised communities in the United States, predominately Native Americans, but also African-Americans because their own history of displacement, slavery, and oppression was and is equally— if in distinct ways—part of the “American” imperialist project. *Almanac* also insists that both environmentalists and veterans share some agendas with indigenous revolutionaries. They all reject colonial-capitalism’s military and extractive legacies, connecting them to other communities most vulnerable to colonial-capitalism: people of color, women, children, people with AIDS, the homeless, and immigrants,

for example.⁷ All of these “despised outcasts of the earth” will be part of the revolution, and the fact that they are not “part of a single group or organization” is precisely what empowers them (513).

The identity politics that emerge from indigenous oppression is thus aligned with the identity politics of other groups that have been oppressed in other ways. In this sense, *Almanac*'s vision of revolution seems contradictory at times: while *Almanac* envisions of a group of pan-Indian, African-American, veteran, and environmentalist revolutionaries, it also insists on the primacy of Native American identity, history, and land. This contradiction emerges powerfully at the novel's end in Silko's portrayal of the signal that the revolution will begin: the emergence of the stone snake from a uranium pit-mine in New Mexico. The pit-mine is a symbol of the Destroyer's exploitation of the land and people of the Americas, and it is a *uranium* mine, symbolizing the destructive capacity of science, which is responsible for nuclear bombs. The mine is an emblematic landscape because it bore the human and environmental consequences of colonialism: the containment of Native Americans on reservations, the extraction of uranium from Native American land for U.S. military operations, the desacralization of the physical landscape, and the exploitation of Native American labor, which made all of these actions possible. The snake's signal from the pit-mine ends the book, but it foretells the revolution: “the snake was looking south, in the direction from which the twin brothers and the people would come” (763). The revolution will involve a variety of groups and interests, with particular focus on the indigenous civilizations of the Americas (hence the southern direction of the snake's gaze) but the source of empowerment for the revolution is located in traditional Pueblo lands and cosmology. The “twin brothers and all the people” will converge on the United States and reclaim the lands of the Americas. Thus the contradictory identity politics: the vision of

⁷ As I will argue below, many of these groups are marginalized due to their perceived displacement or insufficient “sense of place” by the dominant order.

indigenous justice is pan-Indian, even transnational, yet it nonetheless convenes on U.S. soil, where the sign for revolution originates.

The revolution will reverse the destruction wrought by colonialism. This reversal simultaneously reinforces a revisionist historiography, reinforcing that history is not just in the past, but animates the present and the future as parts of a cycle:

The forces were harsh. A great many people would suffer and die. All ideas and beliefs of the Europeans would gradually wither and drop away. A great many fools [...] would die pretending they were white men; only the strongest would survive. The rest would die by the thousands along with the others; the disappearance would take place over hundreds of years and would include massive human migrations from continent to continent. (511).

Just as colonialism occurred through migrations of humans from European centers, so too will indigenous revolution bring about mass migrations of indigenous peoples to reclaim the lands from which they were removed. These “forces” of revolution, antitheses to the Destroyer force, will be harsh and unforgiving. They will destroy Destroyer “ideas and beliefs,” just as colonialism destroyed indigenous lives and culture.

The novel’s form is also a critique of colonial capitalism. It mimics the almanac it describes, challenging the linear narrative that characterizes the genre of novel. That is, the “almanac” that appears in the novel is a collection of stories that prophesy the revolution and mirrors the novel itself, which is structurally similar to an almanac. The almanac “had a living power within it, a power that would bring all the tribal people of the Americas together to retake the land” (569). A collection of fragmented and repeated stories from multiple perspectives and about multiple worlds and eras, the novel must be pieced together by its readers in much the same way that the almanac in the novel must be pieced together by Lecha, who is destined for this task. Both the novel and the almanac forecast revolution, mutually reinforcing each other, and the way in which the various characters piece together the almanac parallels the power that *Almanac*’s

readers have to resist or reinforce colonial-capitalism. In this sense, the form of the novel models its message. If almanacs forecast, and if words “generate energy” that “seeks justice,” then the novel itself transforms reality.

The novel demands action by blurring lines between reality and fiction, by invoking history in the present and future, and by framing revolution as inevitable. But it also shocks the reader to act by its graphic and repetitive depictions of injustice. The Destroyer force is not just violent; it is patriarchal and cunning. Dominance is not just economic, political, and geographical violence; violence against vulnerable members of society—children, animals, women, and the disenfranchised—is *sexual*. Characters with political and economic power are almost always also sexually pathological. A corrupt judge, Arne, takes bribes to ignore environmental and tribal laws and has sex with his basset hounds. Bartolomeo, who turns out to be more interested in communism than indigenous justice, sexually exploits a white woman, Alegria, apparently as revenge on capitalist hegemony. By punishing Alegria for his emasculation by colonial-capitalism, Bartolomeo illustrates how racial empowerment for one person can occur at the cost of another form of oppression for another person. The neo-Nazi character, Serlo, both obsesses about his “*sangre pura*” and loathes all things feminine, and his friends include a wealthy, gay⁸ entrepreneur who trades in specialty pornography—snuff and rape films, and films of abortions and sex changes. Trigg, a man who traffics illegally-harvested body parts and organs, is also incapable of having an orgasm, and he manipulates organ donors to give up their lives by giving them blow-jobs while “the victim relaxe[s] in the chair,” “unaware he [is] being murdered” (444).

⁸ *Almanac* seems to include homosexuality as a sexual pathology here. Indeed, many critics have argued that the novel is anti-gay. Silko’s depiction of homosexuality in the novel is a critique of patriarchy’s hostility to and disgust of all things “feminine.” In the Western patriarchal view that the novel rejects, “feminine” is messy, earthy, and “impure.” Alex Hunt thus nuances the novel’s treatment of homosexuality: “Silko’s evil characters are homosexual or asexual as a sign of their psychological sickness but also as a matter of ideological purpose. Homosexual men represent, for Silko, the ultimate denial of nature, woman, and the racial other in favor of a malign narcissism” (266). This use of homosexuality as a symbol of Western patriarchy is still troubling, but it is consistent with the connections Silko makes throughout *Almanac* between race, gender, and environmental exploitation.

Menardo, the founder of a company that insures other companies against civil unrest, is so paranoid about designs on his own life that he wears a bullet-proof vest while he sleeps; the vest serves as a prophylactic to all sensations, ultimately denying his human sensuality.

Sexual perversion always accompanies Destroyer sensibilities. But Silko uses sexual corruption not simply as a metaphor for moral corruption. *Almanac* conveys colonial-capitalism in sexual terms to suggest that the Destroyer's insatiable appetite is *simultaneously* violent and sexual. Destroyers are, by definition, "humans who [are] attracted to and excited by death and the sight of blood and suffering. [...] Secretly they were thrilled by the spectacle of death" (475). Death and suffering "excite" and "thrill" Destroyers; in Freudian terms, the sex drive and the death drive are the same. One typical Destroyer character, Max Blue, links his sex and death sensibilities on the teleological grounds that they are both "natural" because they are consequences of evolution: "all death was natural; murder and war were natural; rape and incest were also natural acts. Serial murderers who chewed their signatures on victims' breasts and buttocks and even the baby-fuckers—they were all consequences of human evolution" (353). In addition to illustrating how evolutionary logic can be deployed to naturalize violence, Max Blue's thoughts convey how Destroyers literally get off on dominance and violence. By equating colonial-capital exploitation with sexual dominance and deviance, *Almanac* shows the interconnectedness of patriarchy, anthropocentrism, misogyny, and racism (although not heteronormativity, as I mentioned above). Furthermore, Silko's highlighting of the sex/death drive reinforces the centrality of the body to the novel's critique of colonialism. The body is the material of objectification, and the location where objectification's effects are experienced.

Intersections of misogyny, racism, and the Destroyer drive all serve the purpose of showing how the colonial history of rape and torture manifest in the present. The white female character Seese's ability to recognize the parallels between her own victimization and the conquest of Native Americans highlights the relationship between present-day sexism and

colonial conquest. Silko connects Seese's experience of victimization with Native Americans' experiences of victimization. We learn early in the novel that Seese's child has been kidnapped; it is a key subplot of the story. Later, Seese learns from Sterling that Tucson was founded by "criminals" who had "made money off the Indian wars." As Seese comprehends the Indian perspective of Tucson's history, she gets angry. But her language blurs anger about the kidnapping of her child and anger about the conquest of the Tucson Apaches:

Sometimes her anger frightened her; it was leftover anger that surfaced while Sterling was talking about the Apaches. She had to get rid of the feeling that Monte [her son] had been lost because of anything she had done. The old Tucson mansions along Main Street were the best proof that murderers of innocent Apache women and children had prospered. In only one generation government embezzlers, bootleggers, pimps, and murderers had become Tucson's 'fine old families.' (80).

Seese's raised consciousness about the real history of Tucson and the injustice it entailed triggers her anger about her own victimization, even though she is not Apache. Her recognition of their shared oppression highlights the connections between sexism and colonialism, as well as how these forms of oppression reinforce each other in both the past and the present.

Indeed, Silko links (historical) colonialism and (contemporary) capitalism throughout the text. At one moment, the modern-day Native American character Calabazas is thinking about the Yaqui struggle when Mexican troops "slaughtered four hundred unarmed men and women at Rooster Hill," a continuation of "more than four hundred years" of fighting "since De Guzman had come hunting for Yaquis to enslave for his silver mines." In the very next moment, Calabazas links this colonial past with the capitalist present: "Thinking about De Guzman reminded Calabazas about Max Blue," a contemporary Mafioso who "always had the perfect alibi when a gangland execution took place," and whose wife, real estate entrepreneur Leah Blue, was untrustworthy because she "was doing something all the time with land and with money" (234).

De Guzman and Max and Leah Blue gain power in capitalist ways—real estate development, using bureaucracy and the law to evade accountability, and bribery; Max and Leah are capitalist extensions of the rapacious colonizer, whose name is, not coincidentally, De Guzman. Silko makes it impossible to dismiss the horrors of colonialism as relics of the past; they pervade the capitalist present.

Capitalism extends colonialism's exploitative logic, but even more insidiously so because it does so on the pretense of democracy and free choice. That is, capitalism is colonialism hidden as the "invisible hand" of the free market. But the free market is not so free. It alienates humans from their labor and from the products of their labor, a Marxian tenet that is consistent with indigenous views:

Marx understood what tribal people had always known: the maker of a thing pressed part of herself or himself into each object made. Some spark of life or energy went from the maker into even the most ordinary objects. Marx had understood the value of anything came from the hands of the maker. (520).

Capitalism encourages markets to assign everything an exchange value, which fundamentally exacerbates tensions between workers and the bourgeoisie, or, in Silko's formulation, between Anglo-America and Native America. Capitalism's appetite to turn all things into commodities, which the elite turn into markets, invariably divides the poles of poor/rich, white/nonwhite, human/animal, male/female, etc.

As in Marx's writings, *Almanac* forecasts revolution as inevitable because the destructive forces of capitalism undermine themselves. For example, Zeta and Lecha's white geologist father, who led miners to uranium deposits, is punished for his role in betraying the land and the indigenous communities who live near the deposits. He contracts cancer from his exposure to toxic elements. Like the Marxist view of how capitalism will undo itself, his undoing is an inevitable result of his role in the extraction of resources. He

had been perfectly capable of destroying himself. His ailment had been common among those who had gone into caverns of fissures in the lava formations; the condition had also been seen in persons who had been revived from drowning in a lake or spring with an entrance to the four worlds below this world. [...] The white man had violated the Mother earth, and he had been stricken with the sensation of a gaping emptiness between his throat and his heart. (121).

His role in facilitating the commodification of Mother Earth caused his ailment. Revolution is not a matter of revenge or vying for power; it is nature's inevitable response to the "greedy destroyers of the land" (156). The deterioration of his body is self-inflicted and inevitable, an analogy for the fate of capitalism in Marxist thought.

Calabazas affirms this notion of revolution as retribution:

Guns and knives would not resolve the struggle. He had reminded the people of the prophecies different tribes had. In each version one fact was clear: the world that the whites brought with them would not last. It would be swept away in a giant gust of wind. All they had to do was wait. It would be only a matter of time. (235).

It is the white world's inability to sustain itself that will be its undoing, not a violent uprising of "guns and knives." The white world is unsustainable, and so it would just be a matter of time before it destroys itself. This is not to say that the mobilization and resistance of the oppressed are immaterial. Again, their crucial role in capitalism's overturning of itself is that of "retelling the stories." Remembering history and retelling the stories will "cure the suffering and the evils of the world" (316). But ultimately, the revolution will be an inevitable result of the white world's mistreatment of land and indigenous people.

In the novel, capitalism is insatiable and Destroyers commodify everything so that the wealthy can get wealthier. The novel's critique of capitalism draws on Marx, and Silko elaborates the relationship between Marxism and indigenous values:

Marx had been inspired by reading about certain Native American communal societies. [...] Marx had learned about societies in which everyone ate or everyone starved together, and no one being stood above another—all stood side by side—rock, insect, human being, river, or flower. Each depended upon the other; the destruction of one harmed all others. (520-1).

In this passage, Marx's social order is indigenous because Marx knew that "no individual survived without the others," and that "stories, or 'history,' accumulated momentum and power," that they are "alive with the energy words generated" (521) and have the "power to move millions of people" (521). Thus, according to the novel, Marxism supports many indigenous views: communalism, intrinsic sacredness of each individual object, interdependence, the inevitability of revolution, and the power of stories to have material impact on the world. Marx's critique of capital explains why growth requires social *in*justice and environmental exploitation.

But, in his appropriation of indigenous values, Marx "had misunderstood a great deal" (519) as well. He failed to understand that the "stories belonged to the spirits of the dead" (521). His hostility toward religion and his appropriation of Native American ideas also make him an ambivalent figure. And some Marxists "were jealous of African and Native American slave workers who had risen up successfully against colonial masters without the leadership of a white man" (527). Marxism as an ideology can help mobilize indigenous communities, but, as in the case of Bartolomeo, it can just as easily be used against them. Bartolomeo's own idea of revolution runs counter to the indigenous view, expressed by Angelita, who ultimately commands Bartolomeo's execution because of their differences: "Bartolomeo stared blankly at [Angelita's] breasts as she talked. He was not interested in what the old Indians thought about the passage of time or about history. He was not even interested in what Marx had to say about time or history" (311). Bartolomeo is a misogynist and views the indigenous race as backward, which leads to his banishment from the indigenous revolution. The example of Bartolomeo allows Silko to delineate

between indigenous Marxism and aspects of Marxism that are “white man’s politics.” Marxism is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The revolutionaries must stay focused on taking back the land and “protect[ing] Mother Earth from destruction” *and* from “white man’s politics” (518). They must not get swept up in any one leader or any one ideology. The only true “leaders of the people” are the ones who “made return of the land the first priority” (524). In this context, Bartolomeo’s dismissal of the Indians’ agenda explains his expulsion: “the Indians couldn’t care less about international Marxism; all they wanted was to retake their land from the white man” (326).

As the above outline of the novel’s central concerns suggests, *Almanac*’s messages about colonialism as geographical violence, the importance and dynamic presence of history, the Destroyer impulse, and indigenous revolution all have implications for the novel’s environmental themes. For example, just as the Destroyer force conflates racism and sexism, it is also exploitative of all categories of “others,” including animals and nonhuman nature. Bridget O’Meara articulates how the novel’s concerns develop an environmental justice perspective, in her apt reading of *Almanac*’s critique of global colonial-capitalism: the “history of globalization is inextricable from the histories of colonization and attendant discourses of power and [...] difference, which naturalize the violent exploitation and commodification of land, labor, and the body of the ‘Other’” (64).

Silko’s depiction of colonialism is interwoven with these environmental arguments. In what follows, I elaborate on the implications of Silko’s critique of colonialism for environmental justice. Silko’s environmental justice messages can only be understood in the context of the above description of the novel’s view of colonialism’s legacy and Silko’s vision of indigenous revolution. That is, the novel does not simply suggest, as one critic put it, that human diversity, “tolerance,” and “coexistence” are “closely related to the nonhierarchical and nondualistic ecological value system” (Kang, 748). Indigenous justice is not just a metaphor or model (as

implied by the description “closely related”) of ecological health. Rather, Silko’s vision of environmental health is *materially* connected to indigenous land claims.

The Novel’s Vision of Environmental Justice

In many ways, the novel’s emphasis on indigenous land sovereignty suggests that indigeneity and environmentalism are compatible and mutually supportive. The “geographical violence” of colonialism did not just undermine indigenous sovereignty; it also entailed environmental destruction. Manifest Destiny entailed indigenous conquest, but also deforestation, railroads, loss of animal populations, and landscape alterations for settlement and farming. Just as colonialism’s oppression of Native Americans paved the way for capitalist oppression of Native Americans, so too does colonialism’s environmental destruction extend in the capitalist era, particularly in the form of rapacious destruction of land for development and economic gain. Exploration, “discovery,” and even mapping licensed the “scientific study” of land, which objectified it for purposes of extraction. We can see the retribution for these actions in the self-destruction of Zeta and Lecha’s father, for instance, described above. Treating the environment as a “resource” (in Marxian terms, giving it “exchange value”) legitimizes the extraction of minerals, water, wood, and animal products, as well as unregulated polluting as a byproduct of these processes. Colonialism and capitalism are therefore interrelated in terms of how they treat Native Americans and the environment of the U.S.

And the dual impact of colonial-capitalism on indigenous groups and the environment has been *materially* related: expansion and capitalism commodify Native American lands, which led to the containment of Native Americans living on resource-rich lands to reservations. Conquest of lands for the purposes of territorial expansion and resource extraction necessitated the conquest of Native Americans, just as the “civilization” of Native Americans necessitated territorial acquisition. These projects reinforced one another. That is, in order to conquer Native

Americans, their ties to the environments on which they lived and in which their identities were embedded had to be cut. And in order to acquire the resources and territories of the Americas, the indigenous populations had to be moved to reservations. Thus, environmental destruction and indigenous conquest were two sides of the same colonial project, a project that capitalism extends. The ideological aspects of colonialism—desacralization and commodification of the land, Western cultural and linguistic forms, patriarchy, and historiography, for instance—facilitated this territorial appropriation and environmental destruction.

The novel articulates the social justice implications of colonial-capitalism's environmental costs for indigenous communities, as well as the adverse environmental effects of the dispossession and alienation of Native Americans from their lands. It highlights this indigenous-environmental interdependence and colonial-capitalism's effects on this interdependence through two key themes: 1) the ability to appreciate nuances in people and landscapes as matters of justice, survival, and resistance; and 2) the dual, material exploitation of human bodies and environmental resources. The former is an epistemological critique of colonial-capitalism, while the latter is a materialist critique. They both have important implications for environmental justice.

Landscape Nuances

Silko's critique of colonial-capitalist forms parallels some mainstream environmental values, most specifically environmentalism's attention to questions of "place" and "placelessness" in modern society. But while mainstream environmentalism bemoans the losses of place and human perception of place for strictly environmental purposes—in biocentric terms, that is—Silko, in contrast, critiques loss of place and place perception for environmental *justice* ends. That is, while mainstream environmentalism's fetishizing of place often puts the needs of a place's "nature" above those of people living in that place, *Almanac*'s treatment of place

emphasizes the interdependence of place and social justice. In other words, *Almanac* provides an environmental justice critique of place that is often missing in mainstream environmental discourses.

In order to emphasize the importance of appreciating landscape and recognizing the human-nature interconnection, *Almanac*'s villainous characters are characteristically insensitive to place, unaware of nuances in landscape, disrespectful of the importance of healthy land to later generations, and denying of the human history embedded in the land. For instance, responsibility to land recognizes human dependence on it, whereas Destroyer "placeless" sensibilities treat land as a commodity. The Destroyer character judge Arne articulates this contrast: while "Indians grew connected to a place; they would not leave Tucson even after all of Arizona's groundwater was polluted or pumped dry," the Destroyer sensibility, expressed here by the corrupt judge Arne, "doesn't care"; Arne "would probably not live to see it." Destroyers extract value from land, leave it polluted and desiccated, and then move on. They seek short-term economic gain and power, and are not concerned about future generations' dependence on the land. They are content to "abandon" Tucson and Phoenix "by the hundreds of thousands after all the groundwater had been consumed" (651), leaving Indians to bear the burdens of pollution and scarcity that they did not cause, on lands on which they have been forcibly placed. Indigenous place ethics recognize an intergenerational dependence on resources and the fact that those who depend on the land will bear the consequences of its mistreatment. This connection between responsibility to place and environmental justice is central to the novel.

This indigenous land ethic arises from an indigenous way of perceiving the land. The ability to read landscape is central to Silko's environmental justice view of what distinguishes "Destroyer" views of place from indigenous views of the relationship between land and human history. The Destroyer inability to appreciate and therefore "read" land translates into disrespect for land and its relationship to human needs, as well as a failure to see human dependence on the

land. In one example, an insurance man for a petroleum exploration company in Alaska sees the landscape of exploration as a landscape of “frozen wastes,” and believes “there was no life on the tundra, nothing of value except what might be under the crust of snow and earth”—oil, gas, uranium, and gold (159). The insurance man delivers these comments while in an airplane, flying above the tundra. This aerial perspective underscores and produces his utilitarian land ethic; his class and race privilege distance him from place, captured by his position in an airplane, since his occupation involves hyper-mobility and therefore the inability to become responsible to any place. He thus fails to read the landscape as “land”; he is only capable of interpreting it through the lens of the global search for profit. The Alaska natives who live on the land and perceive it from the ground perceive something very different; their phenomenological intimacy with the land is in stark contrast to the ocularcentric perspective of the insurance man in the airplane. The insurance man’s bad ethic is thus epistemological and ideological; just as colonizers’ perceptions of the lands they colonized as empty, virgin, or waste made it possible for them to impose their own colonial landscape fantasies, the insurance man’s inability to perceive the human-nature interdependence of the tundra value makes him only able to grasp the land’s exchange value. Thus, just as imperialism is a “geographical act of violence” in this sense, capitalism erases place as it commodifies it.

Calabazas provides the best example of the environmental justice implications of knowing how to read landscape in *Almanac*. Calabazas is a quintessential “story-teller”; he weaves long “lectures” in the form of stories—what he calls talking in “Indian style” (215). While driving through the desert terrain with his partners, Mosca and Root, Calabazas begins one of these lectures. It is a “sarcastic lecture on blindness” “solely caused by stupidity” (201) that concerns the importance of recognizing the differences between things.⁹ He says:

⁹ This use of “blindness” as a metaphor for stupidity is problematic, and only reinforces my argument in Chapter III that disability is a “narrative prosthesis” (in Mitchell and Snyder’s terms) for alienation from

I get mad when I hear the word identical. There is no such thing. Nowhere. At no time. All you have to do is stop and think. Stop and take a look. Look at it for what it is. This rock is like it is. Look. Now, come on. Over here. This one is about as big, but not quite. And the rock broke out a chunk like a horse head, but see, this one over here broke out a piece that's more like a washtub. (201).

Calabazas' lecture rejects that sameness exists between any two things, and reveals the implications of this view. He sees the inability to appreciate nuances in landscape as stupidity. Calabazas explains this dynamic relationship between history and place: "each location, each place, was a living organism with time running inside it like blood, time that was unique to that place alone" (629). Time is like blood and it inheres in place; history is present and it is alive with the spirits of ancestors, and it is en-placed. Just as *Almanac* suggests that the individual does not live in a spatial bubble, immune to structural and environmental constraints, the individual does not live in a temporal bubble, absolved of responsibility to remember the past or free from moral responsibility for the future.

Almanac portrays the inability to notice nuances in the environment as pathological; it is a sign of "stupidity." This insensitivity or stupidity can be a result of post-traumatic stress, whether the trauma is colonial-capitalism or the loss of a loved one; for example, Seese's loss of her best friend deadens her ability to appreciate place: "Seese could not remember seeing the hills and trees or the ocean after Eric's suicide [...] Seese had been unable to remember anything except disjointed arrivals and departures in international airports" (53). Trauma disconnects Seese from her environment, causing senses of displacement and alienation, which constantly moving through airports exacerbates. Her position in the airport is key here, as Silko has already indicated a suspicion of people who fly a lot (i.e. the insurance man flying over the tundra in Alaska).

nature. In fact, over-emphasis on the visual could just as easily be the cause of insensitivity to landscape nuances, as the insurance man's bird's-eye view of the tundra suggests. But Calabazas' point resonates regardless: a responsible land ethic requires an ability to perceive landscape nuances.

Postmodern geographer Edward Relph's theory of "placelessness" in late capitalist society helps clarify *Almanac's* critique of the kind of disregard for place that airports engender. Airports are the quintessential non-places because they are "marked by transience"; the airport is "not only [a] feature of placelessness in [its] own right, but, by making possible the mass movement of people with all their fashions and habits, [...] encourage the spread of placelessness well beyond [its] immediate impacts" (Relph, qtd. in Cresswell, 45).

Placelessness is caused by being "detached from the local environment," and people who disregard place cannot distinguish anything specific "about the particular locality in which they are located" (Cresswell, 43). According to theories of "placelessness," capitalism causes placelessness because it commodifies, homogenizes, and standardizes places in the name of growth and efficiency. Placelessness is felt as a loss of "sense of place" and awareness of the uniqueness of individual places. Placelessness leads to seeing all places as "identical," to use Calabazas' term, and thereby to allow for the homogenization of places. Placelessness is thus not just a signal of the exploitation of a place and its inhabitants; as a "stupid" way of seeing—as an epistemology, in other words—it also makes such exploitation possible.

Placelessness erases human history of place as much as it erases place. In contrast to Seese's sense of placelessness, Calabazas' ability to appreciate landscape nuances, to exhibit a heightened attentiveness to his surroundings, is central to an ethic of community and land. Calabazas' attentiveness to nuance in landscape challenges capitalism's objectification of landscape. But it also suggests that being able to perceive landscape nuances is not just necessary for an environmental ethic, as mainstream environmental writers and thinkers such as Wendell Berry, Keith Basso, and Yi-Fu Tuan contend. What is important in *Almanac* is that this ability to perceive the landscape is necessary for *social* justice. The ability to read landscape indicates an ability to recognize human-nature interdependence, but it is also related to the ability to appreciate *people*. That is, not only are landscape and people interdependent, as the insurance

man failed to see; how one treats the land is a reflection of one's humanity. Silko connects Calabazas' ability to appreciate landscape to his ability to read people in her depiction of the relationship between Calabazas and Root, a white disabled character. Calabazas' lecture on difference in the landscape seamlessly merges with Root's thoughts on disability, race, and the false ideal of "normalcy," which Calabazas recasts as lacking nuance. Immediately following Calabazas' lecture on appreciating differences in the landscape, Root muses about "difference" in humans:

being around Mexicans and Indians and black people, had not made him feel uncomfortable. Not as his own [white] family had. Because if you weren't born white, you were forced to see differences; or if you weren't born what they called normal, or if you got injured, then you were left to explore the world of the different. (202-203).

Being white prevents the ability to see. But, in the view of this dominant perspective, white is "normal." And it is also "abled." This passage links Root's thoughts about his own experience of disability to the experience of racial nonwhiteness, as well as to Calabazas' lecture on landscape, suggesting a parallel between ability, race, and land. Racism, ableism, and inability to read the landscape are related. They all involve an erasure of history and distinctiveness, the homogenization of land and people, and the subsequent exploitation of both. Placelessness and social oppression are linked.

The key to both social justice and non-exploitative relations between humans and nature is seeing and appreciating difference. One's "difference" in relation to dominant categories of "normal" enables special perspective of both human and environmental surroundings. For example, Mosca thinks Root's brain damage gives him "special power." Root's "situated knowledge," to use Haraway's term, allows him to grasp these environmental justice themes of the intersections of race, ability, and land. Root realizes that difference enables insight into "the world of the different," and he is simultaneously able to perceive environmental racism. For

example, his “reading” of the polluted Santa Cruz river acknowledges the environmental and social costs of capitalist exploitation; when he looks at the river, he “thinks ‘sewage treatment’ not ‘river,’” because “Tucson built its largest sewage treatment plant on the northwest side of the city, next to the river” (189). Root can see that the city committed an act of environmental racism by putting a sewage treatment plant where the inhabitants were least able to protest against it (i.e. “not-in-my-backyard,” assuming a white, male subject position). Root’s “special power” is that he can see the ecological and social degradation that produced this landscape underneath the merely visual, aesthetic surface of Santa Cruz river. Root demonstrates that the ability to see the world, which is a function of what the mainstream calls “abnormal” or “disabled,” in fact provides “special power” to read landscape and grasp its ecological and social meaning. This is not to say that the novel suggests that disability itself provides an ontological “special power,” but rather, being positioned by the mainstream as “different,” in the margins, enables “others” to appreciate difference in other people and landscapes. Being able to read the human history in the landscape characterizes an environmental justice epistemology.

The ability to appreciate difference is not only a matter of environmental justice; it is a matter of survival, as Calabazas sees it. Human survival depends on being attentive to differences in the landscape, but also on human diversity (hence the “inevitability” and self-destruction of the Destroyers). Calabazas revises the typically oppressive logic of the “survival of the fittest” to advance an ethic of diversity. Calabazas states: “Survival had depended on differences. Not just the differences in the terrain that gave the desert traveler critical information about traces of water or grass for his animals, but the sheer varieties of plants and bugs and animals” (202). Here, reading differences between features of the terrain is a matter of survival. But survival is also ensured by differences between kinds of biota, between kinds of *species*. In contrast to the way that evolutionary logic has often historically promoted an ethic of “fitness” based on the “purity of the gene pool,” and in contrast to how it often appears in the novel as neo-

Nazi social Darwinism (as the above example of Max Blue illustrated), Calabazas uses evolutionary logic to argue that *diversity* is what keeps a species alive. The value of diversity—as opposed to values of “normalcy,” “ideal,” competition, or purity—underlies the wellbeing of humans in terms of their relation to each other and to their environments. Echoing recent movements to protect “bio-cultural diversity,”¹⁰ and similar to the need for a diversity of landscapes and the ability to read that diversity, diversity of *people* is necessary for human survival. Thus the novel promotes a Darwinian notion of interdependence; these forms of diversity are not just parallel; they rely on each other.

Further emphasizing the relationship between social justice and reading nuances, Calabazas tells the story of Geronimo. He weaves his points about rocks and diversity as survival into his version of the story about how Geronimo escaped his captors. “Stupidity” about nuances in landscape and people is not only a function of a bad land ethic, it can also be a source of weakness in those in power to be exploited, hence its role in their self-destruction. Europeans failed to capture Geronimo because they failed to perceive differences in both features of the landscape and among different Indians. Echoing his earlier “lecture” on reading rocks in the landscape, Calabazas says, that to Europeans,

a ‘rock’ was just a ‘rock’ wherever they found it, despite obvious differences in shape, density, color, or the position of the rock relative to all things around it. [...] the hills and canyons looked the same to them. [...] Strategists for the Yaquis and the Apaches quickly learned to make use of the Europeans’ inability to perceive unique details in the landscape.

¹⁰ This notion of bio-cultural diversity is certainly an improvement on the movement to protect biodiversity, which is often promoted at the cost of social justice and can act as a modern form of eco-imperialism. But even as bio-cultural diversity emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural traditions, it still upholds ecological science as the “expert” form of knowledge about nature, and it fails to account for how to address moments when biological and cultural “resources” are in conflict with one another.

Similarly, Europeans' inability to notice differences between Apache warriors also allowed Geronimo to slip through their grasp. Thus, the Europeans' inability to appreciate difference in humans and in the landscape was the source of their undoing. The Yaquis and Apaches could use it to "exploit the weakness of the whites" (225). These stories about rocks, difference, and Geronimo allow Calabazas to reinforce the environmental justice implications of appreciating landscape, but most important, they allow him to expose how Destroyers' "stupidity" in this area can be exploited to gain the upper hand.

Almanac's most powerful example of the social-ecological implications of homogenizing place is the story of Leah Blue, the white wife of gangster Max Blue. The Blues move to Tucson from New Jersey against Leah's wishes. But she soon sees a market to exploit there, and initiates a career as a real estate developer: "the real estate market in Tucson and southern Arizona was wide open, ripe for development." Leah epitomizes the problems with placelessness. She enacts precisely the white Destroyer approach to land that Calabazas warned against—exploitation as a function of "stupidity" and "blindness." It is exploitative, self-serving, capitalist, and disrespectful to the uniqueness and history of the place and environment of Tucson. To Leah, the desert is a no-place, a wasteland. Leah thinks the area is already so polluted that it deserves no special care, despite ecologists' and Indians' claims otherwise. Echoing Guzman's landscape aesthetic, Leah envisions "huge tracts of desert" "bulldozed into gridworks scraped clean of cactus and lined with palm trees" (359).

Leah wants to create a community called Venice where people could be surrounded by water. Leah disregards the "authenticity" of this place, as Relph puts it, in her insensitivity to the issues of water scarcity in the southwest desert. Indeed, "the scarcity of water in Arizona and other Western states was an obstacle" to this kind of development. But Leah is undeterred; she is "accustomed to seeing obstacles removed—rolled or blasted out of her way." She feels no need to build within the limitations of the specific geography of the Arizona desert, since "science will

solve the water problem of the West. New technology. They'll *have to*" (374). Leah's "technological optimism" assumes that technology will clean up the mess of capitalism's destruction and compensate for nature's (perceived) lack. It will solve the environmental problems of her own practices. They'll "have to" because the market rewards her exploitation, and therefore the market will take care of the consequences by rewarding technological fixes. That is, Leah's responsibility to the land is displaced onto the market, which in turn will "have to" create another market of "new technology" to fix the very problems it created.

Leah's disrespect has epistemological origins. She fails to recognize that her activities will exact costs on the environment because she cannot see any *ecological* value there in the first place. Her vision for the place literally prevents her from *seeing* its ecological value; she fails to see the specific ecology and geography of this particular place. When she digs wells to find water and is sued for transgressing environmental laws, she cannot "understand why the Indians or the environmentalists" bothered to sue. She wonders, "what possible good was this desert anyway? Full of poisonous snakes, sharp rocks, and cactus! Leah knew she was not alone in this feeling of repulsion; most people who saw the cactus and rocky hills for the first time agreed the desert was ugly" (750). Like Guzman's imperialist "love of trees" sensibility that opened this chapter, Leah can only see value in a landscape that is aesthetically beautiful to *her* sensibilities, and only sees value in installing an oasis there. Thus, she exhibits placelessness in both her inability to perceive the desert's unique features and socio-ecological value, and in what Relph terms "disneyfication"—her desire to imprint a simulacrum of Venice on the "blank slate" of this placeless place.

In order to circumvent the legal limitations to turning the "repulsive" desert into a simulacrum of Venice, Leah has sex with the "owl-shit ecologist" to help her "head off protests by environmentalists against her plans for Venice, Arizona" (375). Here, we begin to see that even the environmentalists are not the environment's best ally. Leah uses sex as power over the

owl-shit ecologist, suggesting that the ecologist's own environmental ethic is not as strong as his desire for sex.¹¹ For this ecologist, desire for sex trumps concern for the environment, and capitalism is sexualized. Yet again, the ecologist may appreciate the desert as beautiful or as containing an ecologically valuable species, which are certainly better approaches than Leah's, but these views fail to ensure the protection of the desert, much less the owl. And the legal system put in place to protect the environment can also be circumvented; Leah asks Max to "play golf" with judge Arne to ask him to "dismiss a [water rights] cross-suit" by "some Nevada Indians" and make the state of Arizona grant Leah her "deep-well drilling permits" to find water (376). In these cases, Leah's sexual bribe and her relationship to Max enable her to override environmental activists, Native American land claims, and even the law. Indeed, the law's ability to ensure "justice" is directly proportionate to its (white) practitioners' ability to resist the lures of capitalism and exploitation, which is to say it is anything but blind. Indeed, at the novel's end we meet Wilson Weasel Tail, a Lakota poet-lawyer, who confirms that the law is corrupt: "the people didn't need more lawyers, the lawyers were the disease not the cure. The law served the rich" (713).

Further, Leah's disregard for an ecosystem's value and limitations exemplifies *Almanac's* message about placelessness in the postmodern, late capitalist society. Venice, Arizona imposes a simulacrum of Venice, Italy, where water abounds, onto a desert environment where water scarcity is the primary source of social and ecological injustice. The novel repeatedly uses these tensions over water to highlight the environmental justice problems of the southwest. Given the long history of battles over water "reclamation" and rights in the region, Silko's portrayal of

¹¹ As I will elaborate below, the ecologist represents a distinctly mainstream form of environmentalism that Silko distinguishes from indigenous environmentalism. His specialized focus on owls is suggestive of the Western scientific habit of compartmentalizing and taxonomizing species, as opposed to an indigenous view of the interrelation of all species. This tension is an ongoing debate in the environmental movement—how to justify protecting individual species if the unit that matters is the ecosystem? How to defend ecosystems when individual species are much more effective at garnering public support?

Leah's sense of entitlement to water engages the text in *the* political ecological debate of the southwest—water rights and scarcity. Similar to Guzman's use of water to feed his cottonwoods and the *americanos*' appropriation of good land "where the water was" after the annexation of Mexico, Leah's water politics epitomize colonial-capitalist avarice. Her technological optimism that science will "fix" the problem of water scarcity, combined with her capitalist ruthlessness that overcomes all obstacles to her vision, express the arrogance of postmodern, late-capitalist disregard for place: "Leah saw Mediterranean villas and canals where only cactus and scraggly greasewood grew from gray volcanic gravel" (378).

Bodies: Environments

These place themes correspond to the novel's foregrounding of the body as a location of both exploitation and empowerment. The material quality of bodies, like land, renders them vulnerable to objectification and exploitation for profit. Just as capitalism pollutes landscapes and sacrifices place in order to create markets, it extracts value from the bodies of those without political or economic power. The novel takes the commodification of the body one step further; the very bodies weakened by capitalist exploitation, military operations, and environmental degradation are all the more vulnerable to further exploitation. In *Almanac*, the colonial-capitalist structure thus twice extracts value from bodies. Like Guzman's slaves planting cottonwood trees, "black slaves had labored to make the United States rich and powerful" (427). Later, because they are less likely to be able to avoid the draft, black Americans became the foot soldiers in a "war in Southeast Asia." Clinton relates the victimization of African-Americans and the Vietnamese: the war "had been fabricated as a location and occasion for the slaughter" not just of Asian communists, but "of the strongest and most promising young men of black and brown and poor-white communities" (407-408). By emphasizing that the war "slaughtered" black American men, Clinton reveals the racism on which America's "war" for "democracy" relies. Like the slaves in

Yoeme's story that opened this chapter, black Americans' corporeal labor is doubly extracted to support nation-building and maintain the status quo.

The character of Trigg expresses how these processes extend through capitalism. The bodies of the weak are not useless to capitalism; on the contrary, they present a venture opportunity for Trigg. Trigg's own disablement (he has a spinal-cord injury) amplifies the corporeal ironies of his capitalist aims. His ultimate goal—and the ultimate irony of his character—is to make money from the market in weakened bodies to find a cure for his own disfigurement. Trigg is the second disabled character we meet in the novel, but he is distinct from Root in that his disability makes him vengeful, and rather than appreciate “the world of the different,” he wants to exploit it. Both Root's and Trigg's disabilities were caused by accidents in their adult lives, but while Root's disability gives him a “special power” to perceive social injustice, Trigg's disability triggers his Destroyer sensibility. He becomes self-engrossed, narcissistic, and obsessed with sex, death, and extracting value from their combined proliferation.

Perhaps Root and Trigg are morally juxtaposed because, while Root redefines his disability as an extra *ability*, Trigg seeks to “cure” his disability. In order to do so, Trigg disfigures, disables, and renders lifeless the bodies of the disempowered in order to obtain the resources to “fix” his own body. This contrast between *integrating* disability versus treating disability as *pathology* corresponds to what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson describes as a contrast between empowerment and oppression. In contrast to Root's story, Trigg opens a business called Bio-Materials, Inc., which includes plasma donor centers, but becomes a front for a black market in organ theft and trading. He believes “there were millions and millions to be made from treatments for people addicted to alcohol and other drugs” (382). Following the capitalist logic that the individual is responsible for addiction and its consequences, Trigg sees this venture as merely speeding up the inevitable. Whereas the “social model” of disability, like Silko's point throughout the novel, insists on the structural causes of addiction—colonialism, racism, ableism,

sexism, etc. If we interpret Trigg's venture from this lens of the "social model" of disability, we can see that it serves to extract the value of bodies on both ends of capitalist production. First, his venture necessitates killing people to harvest parts of their bodies:

Biomaterials, not new antibiotics or drugs, were going to be the bonanza of the twenty-first century. [...] Not just plasma, not just blood! [...] Biomaterials—the industry's 'preferred' term for fetal-brain material, human kidneys, hearts and lungs, corneas for eye transplants, and human skin for burn victims. (398).

Blood and plasma can be extracted without killing their donors, but harvesting biomaterials requires killing their donors, which raises the sticky question of who has the power to consent to supplying this new market demand. Those in power whose bodies need repair use their economic power to purchase corporeal wholeness, but does so at the cost of the corporeal wholeness of the poor. Indeed, Trigg "bought a great deal" of the bodies he uses "in Mexico where recent unrest and civil strife had killed hundreds a week. Mexican hearts were lean and strong, but Trigg had found no market for dark cadaver skin" (404). Here, Silko emphasizes the racial dimension of Trigg's business by noting the fragmentation of these bodies. That is, hearts and eyes are desirable because they are not racially marked. But skin—the signifier of racial identity—has no value. Ironically, though, the very bodies most "available" to be harvested are, not coincidentally, nonwhites. Thus, if economic growth can result from civil unrest, lack of services for homeless, vets, and the diseased, then human rights, racial equality, and human security are inversely related to economic growth. Clinton interprets it all as just another word for slavery, highlighting postmodern late-capitalism's relationship to colonialism: "all around them lay human slavery," although "it had been called by other names" (411).

Trigg's success in this market conveys *Almanac's* message that capitalism not only feeds off the *labor* of bodies, but off the death of material bodies themselves. That is, capitalism turns bodies weakened by colonial processes into sources of capital for those in power. As Trigg's

company shows, capitalism can only survive by creating new markets all the time, and by extracting the lives of some bodies in order to support the lives of others. At one end of the process, then, these bodies' strength is extracted, while on the other end, the same process that weakens bodies by exploitation, war, and inequality, turns those same bodies into a new resource. The byproducts of warfare and structural injustice—masses of anonymous dead bodies—can feed a different market: the market for disassembled body parts to extend the lives of the wealthy.¹² But of course, this market perpetuates the cycle by supporting the need for warfare or other means to produce anonymous masses of bodies. *Almanac* parallels this form of corporeal extraction to the way in which the bodies and labor of race horses are extracted for the purposes of amusement: “the more horses that got hurt or just lay down and died, the more money people made” (197). The harvesting, dissecting, and trafficking of bodies allows Silko to show that bodies are the resources capitalism uses to fuel its growth, and that the loss of corporeal integrity is a necessary “externality” of the capitalist system, the cost of which, like pollution, is born by the weak.

The alienation of humans from their bodies reaches a whole new level in a world of globalizing markets and wars, and unprecedented movement of people. Just as these phenomena lead to placelessness—the “dissociation of culture from place,” in Anthony Giddens’ words—so too does it lead to the detachment of humans from their own bodies. The “neoliberal” capitalist narrative asserts that human wellbeing everywhere will be improved when economic growth occurs in some places, like Wall Street. But Silko shows the false logic of thinking that “what was good for businessmen and industrialists [in the U.S.] was good for Mexico” (492). Capitalist globalization is just another form of colonialism, which relies on extraction of human and natural resources to support the elite. “Savage capitalism,” growth for the sake of growth, is inversely

¹² This situation is not unlike the way in which pharmaceutical companies benefit twice from the spread of cancer by producing and selling both its causes and cures.

related to human equality, and economic “security” does not necessarily translate to “human security.” Highlighting how these abstract political economics translate in material, personal ways, Bartolomeo’s ex-lover Alegria states: “the system that starved and destroyed human beings for the profit of a few was a system that must fall from the sheer weight of the bodies of the dead” (307). Alegria reframes, in corporeal terms, the Marxist notion that the capitalism’s contradictions (the notion that it *requires* the very resources that it diminishes) will undermine it.

Just as body parts become harvestable, *Almanac* shows how bodies and nature alike are vulnerable to colonial-capitalist destruction. For instance, the corporeal dissolving (through cancer) of Lecha and Zeta’s father parallels the loss of minerals from the landscape he surveyed as a geologist, a process in which he participated and for which his body suffers. Silko relates Root’s ability to “read” the fluvial landscape of Tucson to his corporeal otherness. The exploitation of both bodies and land disrupts the notion that humans and nature are separable, that one is subject and the other object, and suggests that the connection between bodies and land is not a whimsical indigenous notion, but a stark material reality. The bodies of veterans are made vulnerable by the same napalm that destroyed Vietnamese environments and Vietnamese *people*, and in a nasty metaphorical twist, those vulnerable bodies become the material for Trigg’s Bio-Materials industry.

The novel parallels bodies and land in another way. Silko critiques the dominant scientific “biologizing” of inequalities, a logic that turns undesirable people into unnatural species. Menardo’s insurance company, Universal Insurance, seeks to suppress Indian “squatters” surrounding the coffee plantations around Chiapas by sending “a crop-dusting plane to dump insecticide and herbicide on [them]” (475). This act equates people and plants because they are similar nuisances (i.e. weeds) and because they are exterminable by the same process. Universal Insurance ignores the reason the “squatters” are there in the first place—colonial-capitalism. The crop dusting approach thus erases history as well as the living environment and

its inhabitants. The consequences of these failures are both socially and ecologically unjust and, ultimately, unsustainable; Silko's narrative makes her readers understand that managing biotic life for the sake of the "safety" of elites will backfire. Echoing Rachel Carson's critique of DDT, Silko shows that, just as herbicide and pesticide paradoxically disrupt the very ecosystems in which coffee plantations grow and which they are deployed to protect, so too will attempting to erase people from the land defeat its purpose. Biodiversity—not monoculture—is needed to promote growth. *Almanac* frames these efforts as part of the cause of the revolution; Destroyers will have brought on their own undoing through practices like this.

Almanac's Critique of Environmentalism

In all of these ways, *Almanac* advances an environmental justice position: appreciating the "world of the different," as Root and Calabazas do, has social justice *and* environmental implications. My reading thus far has developed this interpretation, which nonetheless still falls short of a full appreciation of the intersection between environmental and social justice issues in the text, as well as the revolutionary potential of Silko's work. A full appreciation of the novel's environmental justice contribution requires closer scrutiny of its powerful critique of environmentalism. Despite land being the central concern throughout the novel, Silko treats environmentalism with ambivalence, suspicion, and, at times, outright rejection. As I illustrate below, Silko's treatment of environmentalists is more critical than collaborative; she is more interested in exposing environmentalists' investments in racism and colonialism than in building coalitions with them. As Alex Hunt observes, "Silko is clear that the wilderness preservationists [...] are not the ideal allies of indigenous people in their concern for the earth" (269). To assume that because the novel is so centrally about land and Native Americans that it is fundamentally environmentalist overlooks the many ways in which Silko attacks environmentalists (especially

“wilderness preservationists”), ways that are informed by her perspective that environmentalism has not transcended its colonial legacy.

At times, indigenous land ethics seem to align with environmentalism’s efforts to protect nature. And environmentalism often looks to a Native American land ethic as a model for how to treat the environment. This appropriation of Native American views results from the notion that Native Americans are inherently environmental—that they are “ecological Indians.” But Silko challenges the ways in which “white” mainstream environmentalism appropriates Native American land ethics for its own purposes and draws attention to the ways in which environmentalism is just as likely to work *against* indigenous interests as it is to work for them. The “owl-shit ecologist” who overlooks environmental regulations in exchange for sex with Leah Blue provides one of several examples that show how environmentalists are sometimes more interested in protecting white (and often male) dominance than protecting nature.

The conventional environmental justice reading of the novel equates “defending nature” with defending indigeneity. But Silko’s treatment of this fraught relationship between indigenous and environmental cultural politics suggests that “defending nature” is an excuse used by dominant groups to marginalize and further oppress those it labels “others.” It is precisely because “the environment” is often used *against* indigeneity (and further marginalizes vulnerable groups) that these conventional readings fail. Silko shows how nature is “doubly othered,” as Lawrence Buell puts it: physical nature is itself objectified, and *ideas* of nature are used as rhetorical strategies to objectify and reject certain human groups. It is in its critique of this second form of “othering” that *Almanac* is most trenchant in its environmental justice contribution. Silko sheds light on a constellation of environmentalism’s exclusions, which are not limited to Native Americans. Although it seems paradoxical that *Almanac* would criticize environmentalism, given all of the ways that it promotes the interests of “Mother Earth” and the

land, I would argue that it is precisely this paradox that makes the novel such an important example of the direction environmental justice scholarship must move.

Silko portrays indigenous attitudes toward environmentalism as ambivalent and cautious, and the indigenous attachment to the land she promotes is not necessarily “environmentalist,” even in environmental *justice* terms. Although white, “Western” attitudes toward nature are often contrasted with indigenous views of land, characterizing the indigenous ethic as “environmentalist” misses an important tension between these positions and ignores the ways in which environmentalism—as a political movement and as a way of understanding the world—has often *supported* colonial-capitalist oppression of indigenous and other vulnerable groups. Although the environment and environmentalists will play a critical role in the revolution the novel portends, Silko offers a series of stories and characters that illustrate how environmentalism often legitimizes colonial-capitalist interests and constructions of the world.

Put simply, putting “earth first,” as the radical wilderness preservationist group, Earth First! would have it, is not the same as Silko’s motto of “land first.” Her perspective is similar to the distinction that Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier make between an “environmentalism of the poor” and “First World environmentalism.” Although their efforts may sometimes overlap, Silko contrasts indigenous issues (land rights, self-determination, community, and the historical connection of Indians to the land) with the conventional environmental issues: wilderness protection, recreation, a strictly aesthetic appreciation of nature, protection of endangered species, and nostalgic attachment to a preindustrial, “pastoral” world. For example, First World environmentalism can be characterized by an “obsession with preserving biodiversity [that] ignores the poverty and suffering of the poor and marginalized, and willfully obscures the history of colonization and its related social and environmental consequences” (Adamson, 170). When environmental goals conflict along these lines of privilege vis-à-vis colonialism, mainstream environmentalism often enlists stereotypes of “ecological Indians” to coerce

“defending nature,” enacting a form of modern eco-imperialism. Attending to these moments in the text thus reveals ways in which ecological others—Native Americans, but also women and nonwhites—are constructed.

One striking example of the novel’s stance toward mainstream environmentalists occurs at the novel’s end, at the International Holistic Healers Convention in Tucson. There we learn that environmentalists will play a crucial role in revolution, as the convention brings together revolutionary characters from various previous narratives and from various parts of the Americas. And the indigenous groups at the convention accept the assistance of environmentalists, as they share a similar, anti-capitalist rhetoric. The purpose of the international convention, “called by natural and indigenous healers,” appears to be, above all, environmental: people are convening “to discuss earth’s crisis” (718).

No wonder, then, that a group of “eco-warriors,” called Green Vengeance, are featured guests. The Barefoot Hopi, one of the Indian revolutionaries, aligns with the eco-warriors. Like the real-life group “Environmental Liberation Front” or ELF, Green Vengeance presents a video of acts of destruction committed by the eco-warriors against iconic infrastructural monuments to capitalism and environmental degradation, the most symbolic of which is Glen Canyon Dam. The video celebrates six eco-warriors who “gave their lives to free the mighty Colorado” river as an act of “war” against the “biosphere tycoons who were rapidly depleting rare species of plants, birds, and animals so the richest people on earth could bail out of the pollution and revolutions” (728). The eco-warriors “were determined to destroy all interstate high-voltage transmission lines, power generating plants, and hydroelectric dams across the United States” (729).

The Barefoot Hopi speaks about what indigenous groups share with the eco-warriors, who dominant society often terms “terrorists.” Again, Silko reframes the debate by challenging the dominant discourse about what constitutes “terrorism”: “eco-warriors have been accused of terrorism in the cause of saving Mother Earth. So I want to talk a little about terrorism first.

Poisoning our water with radioactive wastes, poisoning our air with military weapons' wastes—those are acts of terrorism!” (734). Despite evidence that a Green Vengeance-indigenous alliance is emerging at the convention, Silko makes it clear that the motives of Green Vengeance are quite different from those of the indigenous communities. Both may want a complete overhaul of the capitalist system, to reframe the government as terrorists, and to value the land for purposes other than profit, but their alliance can only be tactical. Silko insists on the power of the indigenous groups to choose the terms of their activism, explicitly against environmentalists' terms. True, the Hopi's promise that “a force was gathering that would counter the destruction of the earth” (734) accurately describes the revolution, but the “affluent young whites, fearful of a poisoned planet” function to help the Hopi to “raise a great deal of money,” as “Green Vengeance had a great deal of wealth behind their eco-warrior campaigns” (726). The Barefoot Hopi's promise of “all human beings belong[ing] to the earth forever” is portrayed by Silko as rhetoric to get the environmentalists on board in order to finance revolution on *indigenous* terms.

In the midst of the seemingly post-racial convention (as it seems to its white participants), where people of all colors are ostensibly coming together in defense of the earth, Silko reminds us that this one-earth, one-people fantasy makes it easy for whites to ignore the ways in which racism persists, and particularly, the ways in which racism takes “environmentalist” forms. Silko exposes the contradictions of white environmentalists funding indigenous struggles: “even in a dirt-water town that hated brown people as Tucson did, the Barefoot Hopi already had people fumbling for their checkbooks, and he was only getting warmed up” (734). Whites see the alliance as ideological; environmentalists think they share an ethic with indigenous groups because both reject capitalist objectification and exploitation of nature. But in the minds of Zeta and the Hopi, environmentalists are privileged whites whose assumptions can be exploited to gain *financial* support. By articulating the monetary, utilitarian agenda behind the Hopi's lofty rhetoric of racial unity and planetary holism, Silko reveals the

underlying schism between indigenous and environmentalist views of nature. This scene also offers a powerful critique of the environmentalists' entanglement in the very capitalist systems they profess to hate. After all, anyone who has a great deal of money has benefited from the privilege of whiteness within the racist hierarchies of colonial-capitalism. The scene reveals the how indigenous groups use the stereotype of the "ecological Indian" to their own advantage.

Similarly, throughout the novel, vulnerable groups "perform" mainstream environmental sensibilities to gain white support. Silko describes the coalition-building strategy of the Mexican revolutionary, Angelita. Angelita adjusts her appeal for support according to her audience's stereotype of Indians:

If Angelita was talking to the Germans or Hollywood activists, she said the Indians were fighting multinational corporations who killed rain forests; if she was talking to the Japanese or U.S. military, then the Indians were fighting communism. (513-4).

This statement suggests that "the Germans" and "Hollywood activists" are in positions of power by virtue of their colonialist legacy, but each group has environmentalist sensibilities that can be exploited to support indigenous ends. Their environmentalism is a form of imperialist nostalgia and sentimentalism toward indigenous people. But, as Angelita knows, these environmentalists are more interested in subverting capitalism and saving rain forests than in supporting indigenous sovereignty. Assuming the "ecological Indian" identity is tactical, not ideological; the indigenous revolution might be environmental, but "saving the rain forests" is not the indigenous vision of what it means to be "environmental."

Angelita's performative tactics also show that environmentalists' alliances with indigenous communities are paternalistic and privilege a white vision of "environmentalism" over the actual environmental concerns of indigenous people. Marxism and environmentalism might have some things in common with indigenous claims, but this passage suggests that Silko sees their differences as equally if not more important, and finds Marxists and environmentalists

hypocritical when they are only willing to support indigenous communities when the communities fit environmentalists' stereotypes. The passage compares environmentalism to communism in that they both appropriate indigenous ideas for their own ends; they are both forms of "white man's politics."

In another passage, Silko mocks the whites who perform goddess- and tree-worship by narrating their gestures as superficial and even ridiculous: "freshly cut evergreen trees were tenderly arranged in a circle by white men wearing robes; it looked as if tree worship was making a comeback in northern Europe." Here, tree worship is a simulacrum of connecting to nature; the *performance* of nature-worship matters more than the trees themselves, as they have been cut down and torn from their roots for the ceremony. This scene recalls Guzman's removal of the cottonwood trees for his landscape design; the novel's theme of trees being removed at their roots to serve the so-called nature-loving sensibilities of those in power makes a compelling connection between colonial landscape sensibilities and contemporary environmental rituals. In both cases, "love of trees" paradoxically inspires un-ecological behavior. Silko exposes the hypocrisy of mainstream environmentalists: their efforts to connect to nature are narcissistic, and not necessarily about nature at all. In another example, "white men from California" (the state that is often associated with New Age appropriation of Native American traditions) dress themselves in "expensive new buckskins, beads, and feathers" and rename themselves "Thunder-Roll" and "Buffalo Horn." Here, Silko seems to be hinting that elite white men "going native" is more a reflection of how alienated they are in their capitalist lives than of their support of indigenous identity. Despite their pretences as environmentalists and support of Native Americans, these men's appropriation of native garb is neither.

In both these scenes at the Convention, Silko emphasizes the hypocrisy of environmentalists, as well as their naiveté: indigenous vendors exploit white imperial nostalgia: "Money was changing hands rapidly; fifties and hundreds seemed to drop effortlessly from the

white hands into the brown and black hands” (719). Once, slavery and colonialism extracted resources of land and labor from the “brown and black hands,” and enforced cultural assimilation and conversion. Now the direction of flows is reversed; whites put money back in those brown and black hands and perform what they take to be indigenous traditions, as brown and black people will perform simulacra of the very identities the whites conquered. The ironies of imperial nostalgia abound in these scenes. But Silko uses irony here to show that the concern for indigenous cultures and traditions amounts to commodification and not to genuine support for claims indigenous people themselves would make. In return, the indigenous participants at the convention capitalize on their own commodification by using white money to support revolution against them.

Silko’s aligning of Germans and environmentalists in the above reading of Angelita’s environmental performance hints at environmentalism’s ties to Nazi ideologies of pure blood and soil. These ties to “eco-fascism,” as Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier call it, provide a key context for Silko’s critique of environmentalism’s legacy of social control. As in the German context, environmentalist attachments to notions of “purity” and “pristineness” in the U.S. context have been enlisted to support other projects of purity, such as purifying the (male) body, the (industrialized) city, or the (white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant) nation. The character that best captures *Almanac*’s message that the attachment to purity can be socially repressive is the African-American militant, Clinton. With insights gained from his education in Black Studies, Clinton conducts consciousness-raising radio broadcasts in which he informs his listeners about the history of blacks in Africa and African-American oppression in the Americas and connects Native American and African-American histories in an effort to unite these distinct racial groups who share a similar history of oppression and slavery. As he campaigns for racial justice, Clinton explicitly implicates environmentalism in the oppression of people of color. In the following

passage, he thinks about how deep ecologists and “defenders of the Earth” often view nonwhite groups as “pollution”:

Clinton did not trust the so-called ‘defenders of Planet Earth.’ Something about their choice of words had made Clinton uneasy. Clinton was suspicious whenever he heard the word *pollution*. Human beings had been exterminated strictly for ‘health’ purposes by Europeans too often. Lately Clinton had seen ads purchased by so-called ‘deep ecologists.’ The ads blamed earth’s pollution not on industrial wastes—hydrocarbons and radiation—but on overpopulation. It was no coincidence the Green Party originated in Germany. ‘Too many people’ meant ‘too many *brown-skinned* people.’ [...] ‘Deep ecologists’ invariably ended their magazine ads with ‘Stop immigration!’ and ‘Close the borders!’ Clinton had to chuckle. The Europeans had managed to dirty up the good land and good water around the world in less than five hundred years. Now the despoilers wanted the last bits of living earth for themselves alone. (415).

The environmentalist position that the earth has been brought to the brink of disaster by overpopulation is neo-Malthusian, and Clinton pinpoints environmentalists because their response is to blame the poor, the nonwhite, and immigrants. Those who seek to defend America’s “limited” resources on the so-called “sinking ark” of the planet argue for closing borders and keeping the nation’s population in check, as Clinton points out. This requires demonizing immigrants as “aliens” and treating them as ecologically “other” in part because they are seen as a drain on America’s finite resources, but also because they are viewed as excessively fertile and too selfish or unenlightened to understand the environmental consequences of their own reproduction. Fertility becomes another form of environmental “pollution.”

Controlling reproduction and immigration in order to preserve America’s resources is not just a modern environmentalist goal; appropriating resources and land by controlling the fertility of Indians was central to the colonialist project. Throughout the first half of the twentieth

century, “Indian women were the targets of an aggressive government-funded mass sterilization program as part of the effort to take over resource-rich Indian lands” (Unger, 45). These neo-Malthusian connections between population control and land persist. Overpopulation in other parts of the globe (those largely inhabited by nonwhites) puts pressure on America’s borders, while the fertility of nonwhites inside the borders of the U.S. must be controlled to ensure that only white people have access to America’s limited resources.

Clinton’s reference to the “extermination” of human beings “by Europeans” for “health purposes” immediately suggests Hitler’s genocide, not only of Jews but of the gypsies, the disabled, and others defined by the Nazi regime as imperfect. It also suggests the same logic of racial hygiene used by eugenicists who would control population genetics to breed “good citizens” for the American national body. The link between Nazi nationalism, eugenics, and environmental values is well-documented in Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier’s *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*. Biehl and Staudenmaier describe how the environment gets deployed in ecofascist ideology:

For a people seeking to assert themselves against an outside intruder, an ‘ecologized’ *Heimat* [homeland] in which they are biologically embedded can become a useful tool not only against imperialism but against immigration, foreigners, and ‘overpopulation.’ Elaborate justifications for opposing Third World immigration [...] draw on ‘ecological’ arguments against ‘overpopulation.’ (35)

The 1973 “Ecological Manifesto” of Germany’s National Democratic party “invoked the ‘laws of nature’ to justify a hierarchically structured, ‘organic order that would govern social relationships.” This Manifesto inveighed against “the environment polluted and poisoned by a humanity that lives increasingly isolated in a degraded mass” (qtd. in Biehl, 40). Ecofascism exemplifies Foucault’s theory of biopower in that it supported policies of eugenics and immigration control, thereby expressing the two “prongs” of “biopower”—the individual body

and the nation-as-species population. Ecofascist ideologies of biopower serve elite interests by ensuring the purity of genes and the purity of the imagined space of the nation. Clinton's thoughts about pollution and race similarly identify the relationship between purity and controlling fertility, closing borders, and eugenics.

Here as elsewhere, Silko draws on U.S. history. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, U.S. leaders drew on nationalist and environmental arguments to justify social engineering on this basis. Welfare went hand in hand with hygiene; immigrants too easily became dependent on handouts from the state, and their fertility threatened white domination. As Mary Douglas has documented, environmentalist discourses of "purity and pollution" were "harnessed" in the nineteenth century as part of "men's attempts to force one another into good citizenship," and the "laws of nature" were "dragged in" to sanction a moral code of racial superiority. Douglas thus echoes Clinton's critique: "certain moral codes are upheld and certain social rules defined by *belief in dangerous contagion*" (3, my italics), making Clinton and Foucault's recognition of the genocidal undertones to environmentalist discourses about hygiene, pollution, and population¹³ historically accurate as well as relevant to contemporary battles in U.S. politics.

Focusing on the effects of overpopulation on limited resources ignores the historical causes of environmental destruction, such as "the rapacious resource depletion of colonies by imperial powers, the forced introduction of monoculture and plantation agriculture in the tropics, displacing subsistence and indigenous agriculture, [...and] the distortion of household structure by colonial wage systems" (Seager, 215). The fact that resources are limited is less a function of overpopulation than it is a function of historical and structural injustices. Clinton makes these

¹³ Of course, there are gendered undertones to these discourses as well. Reproduction and immigration are not just racialized; they are gendered. This is especially true in the current immigration climate, as the vast majority of undocumented immigrants into the U.S. are women and children. Silko addresses the gendered implications of these environmental discourses of purity and pollution in the example of Serlo that I will discuss below. Women of color are ecologically other on two levels, then: they are threats to America's nature because they are polluting on both racial and reproductive levels.

connections: “the despoilers had managed to dirty up the good land and good water” themselves. “Defending the earth” against overpopulation becomes an excuse for extending colonial practices of oppression, legitimizing the control of immigration and limiting—or, in extreme cases, manipulating the reproduction of others—to ensure good “resource management.” The colonial-capitalist destroyers may become “defenders of the earth” when they realize the damage that they have caused, but they are still more likely to deflect blame elsewhere and claim the moral high ground, as Clinton knows. Clinton’s thoughts encapsulate *Almanac*’s critique of the links between environmentalism, population control, and colonialism.

On the surface, it seems a paradox that despoilers of the earth could so easily portray themselves as defenders of the earth, but again, this slippage is precisely the contribution of *Almanac* to environmental justice that I want to emphasize. *Almanac* suggests that this transformation can take place without seeming a contradiction because the despoilers use “the environment” as a rhetorical device to support the colonial-capitalist status quo. Environmental discourses of “laws of nature” and “purity and pollution” legitimize coercive measures to “force” others into so-called “good citizenship,” that is, into lives that do not challenge the system. These modern, environmentally-inflected extensions of colonial power target groups that were the subjects of colonialism and whose “anti-environmental” behaviors make them unworthy of citizenship in the modern state. Clinton’s ruminations reveal how environmentalism can turn colonial “others” into “ecological others” as colonialism becomes capitalism.

This spatial dimension of environmental protection, which expresses fear of environmental degradation as fear of crowding and loss of “living room,” disguises racism and xenophobia as ecological sensitivity, but Clinton sees through it. Through these neo-Malthusian metonymic slippages, brown-skinned people become pollution; like others who spoil the “pristine” wilderness and threaten resources, they are constructed as “ecological others.” The anxiety projected by groups who make this argument is corporeal; the visceral “feel” of

overpopulation—too many *bodies* in too small a *space*—makes it easy to gain support for rejecting immigrants and for programs of population control to address problems that stem from poverty and colonialism. Anxiety about space is really anxiety about race and class. As Frederic Jameson argues, losing what Hitler called “living room” or *lebensraum* is the fear of “losing comfort and a set of privileges which we tend increasingly to think of in spatial terms: privacy, empty rooms, silence, walling other people out, protection against crowds and other bodies” (qtd. in Heise, 75). And, I would suggest, this fear is also about the loss of the “wide open spaces” of the vistas and landscapes of the American West.

With his obsessions about purity of blood and land, his research on eugenics, and his interest in the “rapture of the wide-open spaces” (545), the character Serlo epitomizes the modern eco-imperialist of Clinton’s imagination. Serlo “modernizes” colonialism, particularly through eugenics and capturing resources for use by the few. He is the logical extension of colonial environmental sensibilities taken to the extreme. He is not the eco-warrior, anti-capitalist expression of mainstream environmentalism, but rather the “biosphere tycoon” version, against which eco-warriors organize. But his sensibilities are, nonetheless, rooted in distinctly colonial *environmentalist* values—fear of pollution, loss of space, and racial purity.

Serlo’s disgust for inferior races arises from his vision of how nature should work and what it should look like. Serlo is white and independently wealthy. He invests in his own “research” projects to manipulate human genetics and construct artificial biospheres so that those with “*sangre pura*” (pure blood) can avoid the coming revolution. Indeed, the imminence of the revolution provides the excuse Serlo needs to press forward on his projects to engineer his ideal social-ecological conditions. Serlo’s two-pronged response to the social unrest of the world—genetic and spatial—is congruent with Foucault’s “biopower,” the most potent form of power in the modern world. Serlo’s “utopic” vision requires both eugenics and the control of resources,

nature, and even the biosphere through constructing “alternative earth units,” a vision not that far removed from the goals of many environmentalists.

Serlo allows Silko to scrutinize the role of environmental ideas and discourses in the colonial-capitalist apparatus. Serlo’s obsession with purity and pollution is both hygienic and genetic—related to daily practices of the body and to genes—and he believes his own genes reflect “the importance of lineage” (541). Serlo owns a *finca* (farm) in Mexico where he hosts other friends of *sangre pura*, namely Beaufrey (the gay purveyor of black-market pornographic films, mentioned above). At the *finca*, Serlo works on his plans to create a research center and an institute to refine genes and create “alternative earth units.” The *finca* “was to become a stronghold for those of *sangre pura* as unrest and revolutions continued to sweep through” (541). Beaufrey and Serlo see themselves as being “entirely different beings, on a far higher plane, inconceivable to commoners.” To them, aristocratic descent means being above the law and entitled to judge others. They believed “the words *unavailable* and *forbidden* did not apply” to them (535).

But unlike Beaufrey, who acknowledges that “riches meant little if the cities were burning and anarchy reigned” (542), Serlo thinks his pure blood not only exonerates him from any blame in perpetuating the conditions that are causing the unrest, but also licenses him to transcend it entirely. Like many environmentalists today, Serlo has an apocalyptic view of environmental implosion, but he sees this as the fault of the “degenerative masses” and believes his wealth and superiority give him the right and the means to escape. While the masses are suffering “below” on earth, he and a “select few would continue as they always had, gliding in luxury and ease across the polished decks of steel and glass islands where they looked down on earth as they once gazed down on Rome or Mexico City from luxury penthouses, still sipping cocktails.” Serlo’s alternative earth units will be “loaded with the last of the earth’s uncontaminated soil, water, and oxygen,” and be populated by people with uncontaminated

blood. They will “be launched by immense rockets into high orbits around the earth where sunlight would sustain plants to supply oxygen, as well as food” (542).

Serlo takes no responsibility for creating the problems he seeks to escape, and he has full confidence that his earth units will be “capable of remaining cut off from earth for years if necessary” (543). Joni Adamson argues that Serlo’s desire to “remove the last of the earth’s clean air and water, leaving the planet a virtual prison for people of color,” is an extension of the power relations which have allowed “European countries and the United States [to extract] natural resources from the homelands of indigenous people for more than five hundred years” (172). But I would argue that Adamson does not go far enough. Her interpretation of Serlo’s resource imperialism misses the environmentalist underpinnings of Serlo’s fantasies of appropriation and escape. Land appropriation and escape have roots in the notion of the “pastoral,” a notion that also served a significant role in shaping modern environmentalism.

Serlo’s ties to environmentalism can be more clearly seen using Raymond Williams’ formulation of the links between imperialism and the environmentalist pastoral trope. Serlo’s fantasy of escape is typical of the capitalist-imperialist “pastoral,” as Williams famously described it in *The Country and the City*. Williams contends that capitalism and imperialism have created the discourse of division between “the country” and “the city.” They have constructed the unspoiled “country” as the polar opposite of the polluted “city” in order to escape the unlivable environment they themselves created through capitalist exploitation. As Williams writes, the appeal of “the country” is not an innocent response to crises of “the city”; rather, when we “limit ourselves to their contrast” we commit the sins of the imperialist pastoral fantasy. We must “go on to see the interrelations [between city and country] and through these the real shape of the underlying crisis” (297). In other words, “the country” did not exist *a priori* to “the city,” like some prelapsarian notion of Eden before man’s fall. Capitalist-imperialists feel entitled to escape from the mess of “the city” (which is nearly the entire planet in *Almanac*), and retreat to a

protected, pristine “country.” In this narrative, it is the elites who are entitled to escape, and to remain ignorant of their own role in creating “cities” that make “the country” both necessary and desirable. Williams’ analysis demonstrates that “the country” is just as much a product of modern society as the city. It is not, as the pastoral myth suggests, a place where the last remaining unspoiled nature remains, and where only the privileged few can secure access. Serlo’s pastoral fantasies are expressed in his protected *finca* and his alternative earth units, which, in Williams’ formulation, fail to account for Serlo’s own complicity in the problems he hopes to escape. Through Serlo, Silko critiques this elite sense of entitlement to a pure environment (escaping to “the country”) that characterizes much mainstream environmentalism. Serlo’s earth units enact the delusion of the pastoral Williams describes.

Silko’s critique of Serlo’s earth units can be seen by contrast with the choice she makes for the location of the revolution’s origin—the uranium pit-mine in New Mexico. The despoiled pit mine provides a counter-narrative to the dominant environmental construction of ideal landscapes as pristine places where no evidence of human history is allowed to exist. If these places are “nature” and mines are “sacrifice zones,” then Silko’s choice of the pit-mine as the originating site of the revolution represents not only a rejection of colonial-capitalist exploitation but also a rejection of the wilderness model put forth by mainstream environmentalists, of which the alternative earth units represent the logical extreme.

Silko further critiques Serlo’s eco-imperialism by comparing the privileged gaze from Serlo’s earth units to the penthouse perspectives of contemporary elites “in Mexico City and Rome.” Serlo’s “men of *sangre pura*” look down on the laborers below from the clean, polished, and protected “islands” above, the very existence of which fuel the unrest below, as the islands extract all of the best resources from the earth for the comfort of the elites. Serlo is Williams’ capitalist-imperialist, refusing to recognize that the problems of the earth *stem from* his destructive acts, which create the need for a pastoral escape. Serlo’s approach to the environment

is to seek “technological fixes” rather than address its root causes. Like all the other colonial-capitalists in the novel, Serlo does not see the interrelation of his fantasies and the discomforts he feels entitled to escape.

Serlo’s desire for a dominant “transparent eyeball” perspective of the earth mirrors how the pastoral impulse is enacted in the representation of earth from the perspective of space, a representation embodied in the visual of “spaceship earth.” This global vision of the planet was popularized in the 1960s when the Apollo Space Program first photographed earth from space. Although some have argued that this image greatly promoted concern for the environment, as people could see the planet as a whole and understand its limits, the position of power implicit in its distanced gaze can also be seen as a perspective of domination and control, as viewers cannot see the messy details of human activity and institutions, like the nation-state and capitalism, on earth. As Giovanna di Chiro warns, the image of spaceship earth is a neoliberal environmental fantasy of a “global commons” controlled by an “international class of enviro-experts” (206). Both Serlo’s distanced gaze and his technological approach suggest ways in which Silko critiques environmentalism through Serlo.

The “spaceship earth” perspective that the elites enjoy from Serlo’s earth units suggests another line of critique, especially when viewed in light of the insurance man described above. Like the insurance man’s view of the tundra from the perspective of an airplane, the image of spaceship earth privileges the visual as the primary mode of representing nature. This visual emphasis or “ocularcentrism” is central to the process of objectifying landscape, as geographer Gillian Rose argues. For Rose, the “imperialist gaze” is also male; it feminizes landscape by treating it as an object of consumption or domination vis-à-vis vision. Silko explicitly articulates this point from a Native American perspective in *Yellow Woman*:

So long as human consciousness remains within the hills, canyons, cliffs, and the plants, clouds, and sky, the term *landscape*, as it has entered the English language, is misleading.

‘A portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view’ does not correctly describe the relationship between the human being and his or her surroundings. This assumes the viewer is somehow *outside* or *separate from* the territory she or he surveys. Viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on. (*Yellow Woman*, 27).

Silko is attuned to the potential imperialist problems of privileging the visual. It is no surprise, then, that she portrays Serlo’s orientation to nature in terms of the visual. He too sees land as a two-dimensional snapshot to be viewed—i.e. “landscape”—which makes him the embodiment of Calabazas’ observations about white ways of perceiving landscape, described above. This distanced viewpoint is part of the same imperialist orientation that makes whites unable to detect nuances in landscapes. Yet the pastoral fantasy of ethical and geographical escape requires this distancing move. *Almanac* suggests that this fantasy is impossible and environmentally culpable. Further, the distancing move will ultimately be as undermining of white power as it is enabling.

Serlo’s earth units are a reflection of his underlying mainstream environmentalist ideologies because cordoning off pristine nature is a fundamental premise of wilderness protection. To designate some land worthy of preservation and other land “sacrificial,” as Serlo’s *finca* and earth units do, goes against the indigenous view that seemingly disparate environments are in fact interdependent and rely on each other. Silko’s treatment of Serlo’s earth units dismantles

those Euro-American scientific and philosophic discourses on which mainstream environmentalists base their argument for creating wilderness preserves where some species are viewed as ‘contaminants’ and targeted for removal, but other species are viewed as ‘endangered’ and targeted for protection. (Adamson, 169).

Silko’s critique of the earth units is similar to her critique of the owl-shit ecologist; both create hierarchies of places or species to protect. This is the essence of the wilderness model, which

divides between environments and species worthy of protection along lines backed by “science,” but in which cultural and social hierarchies inhere. Although the earth units are fictional, contemporary environmentalism shares in their appeal and logic. Wilderness zones, not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) environmentalism, and structures like the Eden Project and Biosphere 2 are all examples of the separatist, pastoral (environmentalist) logic behind Serlo’s earth units that Silko scrutinizes.

Serlo’s eco-imperialism is not limited to this pastoral, resource-sequestering fantasy of escape and power. It is crucial to read Serlo’s environmental values alongside his eugenics projects in order to understand how Silko “draws direct comparisons between biological warfare and the policies of environmental racism” (Tillet, 159). Serlo’s obsession with eugenics extends a theme of *Almanac* that we saw in Silko’s depiction of Clinton’s suspicion of environmentalists, who conflate genetic and environmental “pollutions.” Silko’s rendering of Serlo underscores the link between environmentalist and eugenicist sensibilities, a link which activates the construction of ecological others. Serlo reiterates the Foucauldian notion that purity of *nature* and purity of *genes* are the “two prongs” of biopower in the modern era. Serlo is as fastidious about the purity of genes as he is about the purity of the earth units’ environment. Drawing on the evolutionary ideological logic of racial hygiene, Serlo insists that the survival of the fittest is not about social justice; Serlo believes that the Nazi agenda he is perpetuating “was concerned with survival, not justice” (546). In the “strict biological order to the natural world,” he continues, “only *sangre pura* sufficed to command instinctive obedience from the masses” (549).

Linking her description of Serlo to Clinton’s wariness about hygiene and pollution, Silko depicts Serlo’s environmental and eugenicist logics through a discourse of purity. That he is “ahead of his time with his fetishes of purity and cleanliness” (547) informs his views of nature and of human genes. His obsession with purity is so excessive that he refuses to partake in sexual intercourse. Fear of contagion associated with intercourse leads him to believe that penetration is

“silly, unnecessary, and rotten with disease” (546). Rather, he follows in his grandfather’s pursuit of collecting his and other superior semen in extensive sperm banks from which “superior human beings would be developed” (547). Using knowledge he has gained from studying at “private institutes for eugenics research” in Europe, Serlo pursues his own eugenic agenda: eliminating the racial threats to pure blood.

In Serlo’s view of genetic purity, though, women do not exist. Women are dirty and contaminating, and so Serlo’s eugenicist agenda involves eliminating women from the reproductive process. Serlo’s research “had obtained reports from research scientists working to develop an artificial uterus because women were often not reliable or responsible enough to give the ‘superfetuses’ their best chance at developing into superbabies” (547). Serlo’s view of women’s irresponsibility echoes U.S. eugenicist thinking, which paternalistically insisted that women were “mothers of the nation.” For U.S. eugenicists, the path to racial dominance or race suicide was the woman’s to take. Serlo’s agenda of “proper genetic balance” takes no chances; it removes women entirely from the equation. Their messiness and irresponsibility are evolutionarily unnecessary, even dangerous.

Serlo further erases women from the eugenicist project by eliminating the need for sexual intercourse altogether. Just as he wants to sequester only the purest parts of earth in his earth units, Serlo envisions a human society of only men of *sangre pura*. In this sense, the earth, women, and “degenerative masses” are similarly unhygienic, environmentally polluting, and genetically contaminating.¹⁴ They are equally messy and require artificial measures of purification. Serlo’s aligning of nonwhite, female, and nature as the “others” against which the

¹⁴ Serlo’s disgust of women and people of color is related to his environmental sensibility in ways that are similar to how the Nazis saw genetic and environmental purity as related. Freudian historian Klaus Thewelait argues that German Nazi disgust of bodily functions, women, and racial mixing were part of the Nazi emphasis on purity of soil. Serlo shares this with Nazis, a connection Silko makes explicit: Serlo sees himself as continuing “the history of the secret agenda” that “had begun with the German Third Reich.” Serlo’s views about genetic purity and pollution echo what historian Robert Proctor calls “racial hygiene.”

dominant order defines itself reflects what Carolyn Merchant, Karen Warren, and other ecofeminists argue is the inherent injustice in Western culture's dualisms. Through Serlo, Silko shows how environmental elitism relates to the dual ideologies of ethnic cleansing and misogyny.

Silko also scrutinizes environmentalism's ties to imperialist agendas in the novel's explicit engagement with a debate that was raging at the time of its writing and publication—what is known in environmental policy terms as the “environment-conflict debate.” The novel's response to this debate informs my analysis of immigration in Chapter IV, and therefore demonstrates again how the text connects these disparate ways in which ecological others are constructed. Silko is critical of the way that risk and security discourses are deployed in the name of “the environment” to support social control. We know she is critical of these alarmist environmental security discourses because Serlo wants his “alarmist” colleagues of *sangre pura* to realize that they “must stop playing games and take action before the world was lost” (556).

In the early 1990s, pervasive alarmism about a “coming anarchy” argued that overuse of environmental resources in developing nations would drive immigration into the U.S., making “environmental conflict” elsewhere a national security issue in this nation. The environment-conflict position was most powerfully forwarded by social scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon, whose ideas were taken up in popular discourse by Robert Kaplan's 1994 *Atlantic Monthly* article, “The Coming Anarchy.” The essay portrayed an apocalyptic vision of the future, in which “the masses” would violently revolt because of resource scarcity and their own poor resource management. Kaplan's argument became prevailing wisdom in global environmental policy circles and inaugurating a new policy agenda of “environmental security” that continues today in such popular cultural productions as Al Gore's 2006 documentary, “An Inconvenient Truth.”

Mainstream environmentalists generally concur that the neo-Malthusian premise of the environment-conflict argument is true, and this view is only gaining in popularity in the early twenty-first century. This logic suggests that overpopulation in developing countries will exhaust

resources there, and all those people will come running to America to solve their problems.

Kaplan's article distills this premise:

The coming anarchy: Nations break up under the tidal flow of refugees from environmental and social disaster. As borders crumble, another type of boundary is erected—a wall of disease. Wars are fought over scarce resources, especially water, and war itself becomes continuous with crime, as armed bands of stateless marauders clash with the private security forces of the elites. (qtd. in Dalby, 27).

Flows of people threaten the epidemiological and political health of the state. Crime and disease reign. Kaplan's article represents the popularized, nonfiction articulation of the very concerns and narratives that shape the apocalyptic vision of *Almanac*, down to Silko's emphases on private security forces and even her focus on the theme of water scarcity.

Indeed, Kaplan's language summarizes *Almanac's* plot in many ways. Silko describes a similar vision:

Time was getting short; unrest was spreading across the Americas; Serlo and Beaufrey had both lost ancestors to the guillotine. Epidemics accompanied by famine, had triggered unrest. Mass migrations to the North, to the U.S. border, by starving Indians had already begun in Mexico.

Almanac's prediction of crumbling borders, biological threats to white viability, increased human migration, and conflict over resources (especially water) echo Kaplan. Just as Kaplan's article did, *Almanac* "suggests that the fate of modern states is now tied directly to the fate of environments around the world" (Dalby, 29).

But although Kaplan's picture of geopolitical chaos parallels the picture of revolution Silko details, Silko is highly critical of this narrative. Kaplan's "marauders" are Silko's indigenous revolutionaries. Kaplan's "environmental refugees" are Silko's displaced indigenous communities reclaiming their land: "the white man in North America had always dreaded a great

Indian army moving up from the South. The gringos had also feared that one day there would be a spontaneous mass migration” (592). Kaplan’s “private security forces” are embodied in Silko’s impotent character Menardo, who reflects the futility of any attempt by the elites to protect themselves from the chaos their own actions caused. Kaplan’s fear of statelessness and borderlessness is Silko’s opportunity for coalition-building and justice: “borders haven’t worked, and they won’t work, not now, as the indigenous people of the Americas reassert their kinship and solidarity with one another. A mass migration is already under way” (*Yellow Woman*, 122). In *Almanac*’s revision of border history, “the people had been free to go traveling north and south for a thousand years, traveling as they pleased, then suddenly white priests had announced smuggling was a mortal sin because smuggling was stealing from the government” (133). And a shift is indeed “coming,” but it is revolution, not “anarchy.” Depending on your position of power vis-à-vis capitalist-colonialism, the coming anarchy is a threat or it is indigenous and earth justice. If the neo-Malthusian, mainstream environmentalist response to the coming anarchy is to tighten borders and enforce Western environmental policies and restrictions to growth on the nations that seem the most “threatening,” *Almanac* serves as a direct counter-narrative to this dominant view.

Almanac rejects that the coming anarchy is set in motion by problems that underdeveloped nations brought upon themselves through over-extraction, soil degradation, and overpopulation, for example. “Scarcity” is a dangerous rhetoric of the elites, who ignore how scarcity is caused by colonialism and capitalism, which created unjust conditions of resource access and distribution, in addition to un-ecological ways of treating “Mother Earth.”¹⁵ *Almanac* suggests that scarcity “is not only a question of ‘given’ natural attributes or land tenure regimes but also the product of a set of political and economic policies that reduce both peasants’ and

¹⁵ My point here is similar to Mike Davis’ *Late Victorian Holocausts*, in which Davis makes a similar argument: scarcity (or, in Davis’ work, famine) is not a “natural disaster,” but rather one caused by colonialism and long-standing systems of injustice and racism.

ranchers' abilities to produce effectively on available arable land" (Bobrow-Strain, 184). Scarcity is caused in part by military operations, as Joni Seager has shown, as well as neoliberal economic structures and, as Silko herself notes, broken treaties, enclosures, and legal measures that reduce indigenous management rights (*Yellow Woman*, 92-93). *Almanac* asserts that environmental scarcity cannot be explained in Malthusian terms as a tension between population and resources. *Almanac* promotes an environmental justice perspective by showing that "political violence and environmental degradation" stem from "larger economic processes" of neo-colonialism (Dalby 34). Colonialism, capitalism, agribusiness, industrialized farming, military dominance—these structural conditions are better explanations for the ecological and social crises Serlo wants to escape than the Malthusian environment-conflict paradigm he holds.

In further rejection of the environment-conflict paradigm, *Almanac* provides a very different "solution" to the problem of the coming anarchy than Kaplan and even Gore do. Serlo's worries about the imminent unrest push his "hidden agenda" of genetic dominance and eugenics forward:

Brown people would inherit the earth like the cockroaches unless Serlo and the others were more successful at the institute. Dedicated to the preservation of the purity of noble blood, the facilities would provide genetically superior semen. (561).

"Alarmists" like Kaplan, Serlo, and Menardo might think that "bands of illegal refugees trying to make a run for it should be gunned down from the air like coyotes or wolves" (495), or, at the very least, they should be controlled by strict immigration policy. And Gore argues for the less violent response of reducing the U.S.'s carbon footprint, which at least acknowledges U.S. culpability in creating environmental problems.

But none of these historically "environmentalist" options addresses the structures of imperialism and capitalism that create the problems in the first place. That is, these options are characteristically "environmentalist," and the problem with them is that they do not account for

colonial history. In *Almanac*, only indigenous revolution will serve both indigenous and ecological justice. *Almanac* reframes the accepted environment-conflict wisdom; the prevailing environmentalist assumption about the relationship between population, conflict, and resources is not as true as even our greenest of leaders maintain. To Joni Adamson, *Almanac*'s rejection of this narrative is a function of its rejection of the ecological Indian myth: *Almanac* criticizes "romanticized discourses" about "nature's 'fallen children'" because at the same time that they sentimentalize closeness to nature, they treat "ecologically incorrect third worlders or illegal immigrants" as "overbreeding, border-overflowing, slashing and burning, whale-killing, toxic" (169). Thus, what seems a paradox—fallen children are closer to nature (in *history/time* if not in *geography/space*), which makes them ecologically other to contemporary global environmentalism—is in fact the cause of their being othered. Thus, to the extent that Silko is directly engaging this popularized mainstream environmental narrative about a coming anarchy, *Almanac* articulates the imperialist implications of its environmentalist dimensions.

Conclusion: The Ecological Other

Silko's description of a collection of "despised outcasts" allows her to make connections between different oppressions, which often shift along lines of relative power and privilege. For example, veterans and African Americans might not always be united along racial lines, but for the purposes of the revolution in *Almanac*, they are united in terms of their comparable exploitation by the U.S. government. And different tribes come together across differences against colonial-capitalism: "Until the white men came," the Yaqui and the Apaches "had been enemies; sometimes they had raided one another. Of course, as they later reminded one another, the raids and the scattered deaths were not at all the same as the slaughters by the U.S. or Mexican soldiers" (232). Further, environmentalists sometimes contribute to the indigenous effort to "take back the land." But Silko is clear about the fact that their own view of how to treat

that land is sometimes in conflict with indigenous views. Environmentalists may be anti-capitalist in some ways, but residual colonialist aesthetics and privileges are just as likely to undermine their alliance with indigenous groups. As long as indigenous reversal of colonialism is the task at hand, these groups share more than they differ, which makes their alliance more strategic than automatic or “natural,” like the way environmentalists in the novel naively perceive it.

Silko’s portrayal of environmentalists allows her to reveal how they participate in constructing “ecological others” even as they find a role in the indigenous revolution. It is Silko’s description of the strained role of environmentalism in the indigenous revolution, as well as the indigenous leaders’ strategic use of the stereotype that they are “ecological Indians,” that Silko establishes the terms of indigenous environmental justice. *Almanac*’s exploration of the relationship between environmentalism and ecological others sets up the next two chapters, which elaborate on Silko’s depiction of the relationship between how environmental discourses treat people of color and how they treat people with disabilities and undocumented immigrants. That is, the text reveals what the “despised outcasts” have in common—their shared histories of oppression, their corporeal (racial, hygienic, impairment, for instance) otherness with respect to the dominant white, male body, and their shared displacement and environmental marginalization. *Almanac* defines “despised outcasts” according to their status of exclusion from the dominant order, and therefore provides a model for my notion of the ecological other. Ecologically-other communities are distinct in many ways, but share the same terms of exclusion from mainstream environmentalism.

As *Almanac* demonstrates, Native Americans occupy a paradoxical relationship vis-à-vis environmental thought; they are simultaneously “ecological Indians” and “other,” a paradox that renders their exclusion that much more difficult to see. But, as *Almanac* reveals, it is precisely this paradox that creates the possibility for a distinctly Native American vision of environmental

justice in contrast—even opposition—to mainstream environmentalism. The novel establishes connections between colonialism, environmentalism, and social control, and it does so by scrutinizing an underlying ideology of the “pure” body. Environmental notions of “purity” and “pollution,” as exemplified in the above analysis of Clinton, inform the “corporeal unconscious” of colonial-capitalism; physical bodies themselves are the material from which power is derived, and they shape the logic by which boundaries of exclusion are drawn. In much Native American literature, the deteriorating Native American body symbolizes and literally embodies colonial-capitalism’s impact on Native Americans. Indeed, the corporeal costs of colonial-capitalism on Native American communities abound: exposure to nuclear fallout, diabetes, alcoholism, and cancer appear with greater frequency in Native American communities than in the rest of the U.S. population. This has to do in part with the fact that, when tribal *lands* become “sacrifice zones” of toxic waste, so too do Native American bodies become sacrificed. *Almanac* outlines these material connections between bodies and land clearly.

Colonial-capitalism thus often disables the Native American body. In N. Scott Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, for instance, the Kiowa are “bent and blind in the wilderness.” In Simon Ortiz’ *Fight Back* and *From Sand Creek*, Native American bodies literally support U.S. military operations, both in terms of uranium mining and on the battlefield. In the following chapter, I challenge the disabled body’s symbolic power to convey colonial-capitalism’s impact, particularly in literature that is often canonized as “environmental,” and in environmental thought more broadly. The symbolic power of the disabled body to convey the material impact and costs of colonial-capitalism raises the questions: how does disability stand in for racial conquest? And, if environmentalism is a colonial project, as Silko has shown, what role does the disabled body in dominant conceptions of “defending nature”?

Writer Nancy Mairs portrays a link between colonialism, wilderness, and the fit body in her description of being disabled in the West, where values of wide open spaces, mobility, and

independence reign. Her own life in a wheelchair gives her a critical perspective of these values. She writes, “To be a Western writer, as that term is conventionally understood, you gotta have legs. I mean working—hard-working—ones” (175). Mairs feels excluded by the rugged individualist myths of the West, and articulates that exclusion as a critique of those myths: “For twenty years now,” she writes, “I have lived in a landscape too large for me, and getting larger as my physical condition deteriorates. The conventional West—land, lots of land, ‘neath the starry skies above—and the conventional responses to it—exploration, exploitation—demanding a physical vigor I’ve never enjoyed before” (176). Perhaps being excluded from the ethos of “exploration” and “exploitation,” Mairs suggests, is not such a bad thing. This passage suggests a link between the fit, rugged individualist body and the colonial practices of expansion.

Building on the arguments established in this chapter—that environmentalism has colonial underpinnings and constructs “ecological others” along lines of race, gender, and genetics—the following chapter develops a corporeal analysis of the “legacy of conquest” in the U.S. West, especially in terms of this legacy’s relationship to environmental thought and literature. How did it come to be that connecting to nature and cultivating an environmental ethic requires having a fit body? Following Donna Haraway’s insight that eugenics and conservation were closely tied “in philosophy and in personnel” (57), the next chapter investigates environmentalism’s investments in genetic fitness and physical ability.

CHAPTER III

“MAIMED AWAY FROM MOTHER EARTH”:

THE DISABLED BODY IN ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT AND LITERATURE

Nancy Mairs’ experience of disability challenges the myth of the West and offers a relationship to the environment that counters the rugged individualist ideal. Her experience of exclusion from mainstream society is both a function of disability and a function of society’s spatial tropes. One of those tropes is the notion that “*moving* constitutes the Western experience,” as Mairs writes. The freedom to move and escape is “essential to the western experience” (180), and, as she illustrates, ineluctably tied to ideas of corporeal fitness. Mairs’ critique resonates all the more when we understand it as a reaction to a literary tradition that has received no scholarly attention: the use of the disabled figure as a symbol for humanity’s alienation from nature. In this chapter, I investigate this tradition to demonstrate the significance of the fit body to environmental thought, which owes much of its appeal to the western myths and the “legacy of conquest” I have been discussing thus far.

Environmental literature and adventure culture promote the notion that connecting to nature is a corporeal act, an act which requires a complete, whole, preferably fit body. Environmental and adventure discourses convey the message that modernity, especially technology, has severed our connection to nature. This alienation occurs at the level of the body, since the problem is that modernity’s technologies have compromised the body’s ability to perceive and thereby appreciate nature. Nature writer Robert Michael Pyle thus calls the environmental crisis the “extinction of experience” in modernity. Hinting that there are evolutionary implications of our inattention to the world around us, this notion asserts that our

neglect of experiencing the world leads to our alienation from and therefore mistreatment of nature. It follows that the correct environmentalist response is to reconnect to nature through disciplines and practices that hone the nature-perceiving body. These practices have their root in the early wilderness movement, a movement that, not coincidentally, emerged alongside the historical construction of the category “disabled.” Thus, this chapter argues that the disabled body is the “other” against which modern environmentalist identity has been formed.

Introduction

At the heart of outdoor adventure sports is the appeal of personal challenge. The individual—usually male—pits himself against Nature and survives. “[W]hether climbing, running, jumping or plunging,” Bruce Braun writes, “it is the *encounter* and the *challenge* that matter.” Not only do adventure sports provide “the consummate image of courage and skill” (181), they also offer transcendence and purification. As adventure writer and journalist Jon Krakauer explains, the appeal of mountaineering is its physical discomfort: “I quickly came to understand that climbing Everest was primarily about enduring pain. And in subjecting ourselves to week after week of toil, tedium and suffering, it struck me that most of us were probably seeking, above all else, something like a state of grace” (136). As Krakauer’s language attests, adventure culture posits the body as a site of transcendence.

There are links between what makes today’s adventure sports appealing and the nineteenth-century enthusiasm for alpine climbing and so-called “wilderness cults” (Nash). As environmental historians have shown, the modern environmental movement developed in response to various social, economic, and spatial anxieties of the Progressive Era. Environmentalism matured into a movement at a time of turmoil. The civil war represented a victory for the industrializing North, and capitalism, with its intrusive technology, doomed the

Jeffersonian ideal of a country of yeoman farmers. America was becoming increasingly concerned about its identity as a nation-state amid mounting nationalism around the globe (Hobsbawm; Cosgrove). Immigration spiked in the early decades of the 20th century, adding new anxieties about America's identity and growing power.¹⁶ The dark side to "progress" was becoming evident. As workers began to organize, black males could vote, and the women's movement pressed for change, the dominant order had to find legitimacy in new ways.

In this climate, the wilderness became important as a "safety valve," as Frederick Jackson Turner called it in 1893, to replace the role that the frontier had played. When Turner declared the frontier "closed," the independent American spirit fostered by "lighting out for the territory," popularized in the mainstream by Mark Twain and James Fenimore Cooper, for example, was under threat. If the frontier encounter was necessary for the creation of the ideal American, then the close of the frontier meant no more unique American character. With the settlement of the land once considered "frontier," the qualities that made Americans unique would have to be artificially produced in a new conception of the frontier—the wilderness. In tandem with urban hygiene reforms and the City Beautiful movement, the creation of wilderness became an essential means of preserving American character. It provided the setting against which the drama of the frontier encounter could be carried out and "progress" could be made.

In order to move forward, America also needed to master "natural" savagery in order to retain its geopolitical momentum. Environmentalism emerged in response to these domestic and geopolitical conditions, evolving in tandem with Social Darwinism, which portrayed life as a contest for survival. Those who were fit, both individuals and races, "naturally" dominated those who were weaker. American national identity was practiced through wilderness survival exercises that showcased America's "inherent" superiority. The nineteenth-century grandfathers of the modern environmental movement, such as Ernst Haeckel and George Perkins Marsh, promoted

¹⁶ Between 1890 and 1914, fifteen million new immigrants entered the United States (Kevles).

an image of the ideal American tested in the wilderness, showcasing self-reliance as achievable through an encounter with “raw nature.” Environmentalism gained support from many whose interests were potentially in conflict, but for whom environmentalism seemed to address their social anxieties: those who were part of the romantic reaction to modernity, such as John Muir; those who wanted to preserve the myth of American exceptionalism, such as Turner; and those who feared the loss of white, Protestant dominance and wanted to prepare Americans for the competition ahead, such as Roosevelt.

The birth of the environmental movement was thus not just about preserving nature in the face of industrialization; it was also a response to new social arrangements of the post Civil War era. Under the pretense of preserving a social “safety valve,” wilderness advocates were also able to advance socially repressive agendas. The positive image of environmentalism as protecting nature for “resources” and “refuge”¹⁷ disguised its exclusions and legitimized social norms in ways that helped preserve the declining power of the Anglo-Protestant elite. Denis Cosgrove thus argues that environmentalism is riddled with “hidden attachments.” Wilderness served as “the theater of American empire” (35), and became a meaningful idea only in the context of environmentalists’ racial and social anxieties. It justified the displacement of Native Americans, subsistence farmers, and squatters (Spence; Jacoby) in order to “conserve” land for white men from politically powerful families. The wilderness cults of the Progressive Era promoted wilderness as essential to moral, racial, and national “purity,” a focus that reflected American culture’s obsession with “social hygiene” in the late nineteenth century (Kosek; Braun).

¹⁷ The distinction between valuing nature as refuge or resource occupied Progressive Era environmentalists, who were divided between “conservationists” (who preferred protecting nature as “resource”) and “preservationists” (who wanted to protect nature for “refuge”). To these groups, the projects of protecting nature as resource and as refuge were at odds, which split conservationists Pinchot and Roosevelt from preservationists such as Muir. Roderick Nash details this split in *Wilderness and the American Mind*. For my purposes here, though, both orientations toward nature amount to the same thing: nature is a “safety valve” for society’s ills.

These racial, gendered and classist exclusions of the nineteenth-century wilderness movement emerge in today's "risk culture," which similarly seeks purity, grace, and transcendence through the wilderness encounter. The early wilderness movement's view that the wilderness encounter fosters ideal characteristics in the morally "pure" individual is also central to today's adventure culture's appeal. Adventure culture relies on a "discourse of courage and conquest" to "suture an anxious middle class masculinity" (Braun, 181). The wilderness encounter continues to give those who participate in adventure sports a sense of moral superiority that is tied to white, elite identity. Today's risk culture thus extends environmentalism's historical "racial unconscious," as Braun calls it. "Contemporary appeals to the idea of wilderness," Cosgrove adds, "still retain these hidden attachments" to racism and expansion (36).

Scholars are thus identifying the race, class, and gender exclusions of early and contemporary environmentalism. They have begun to document environmentalism's relationship to patriarchy, Manifest Destiny, and other ideologies of domination, as well as their links to contemporary environmentalism. But no scholarship has addressed the extent to which environmentalism, the wilderness movement, and this articulation of ideal American identity developed in opposition to a fundamental category of "otherness"—disability. As the above passage by Krakauer shows, contemporary adventure culture prizes the "fit" body—able, thin, young, and male—as a means to transcendence. The role of the body in both the Progressive Era, particularly the Era's wilderness movement, and in contemporary adventure culture calls for an analysis of the "corporeal unconscious" of adventure culture and U.S. environmentalism more broadly. To the extent that engaging in adventure culture has become a reflection of environmental sensibility, bodies that do not fit this model are deemed un-environmental. Extending Progressive Era links between the body, social hygiene, and the wilderness encounter, contemporary adventure culture equates physical fitness with environmental correctness, an equation that I disentangle in the arguments that follow.

Disability studies exposes the extent to which adventure culture's investments are not just racial, gendered, elitist, or imperialist, but rather fundamentally hinges on the fit body. Disability studies allows a clearer understanding of risk culture's rejection of technology (symbolic of modernity's corrupting force) by challenging risk culture's focus on unmediated contact between man and nature. Disability studies theorists contend that *every* body's encounter with the physical world is always mediated. They argue that disability is not an ontological category existing outside of social context, but rather that social notions of purity and fitness helped construct disability as a social, political, and cultural category.

In this chapter, I attempt to expose what I call the "corporeal unconscious" of environmentalism, which lends risk culture its moral authority, in order to broaden what counts as environmentally "good" ways of being in the physical world. Even if the myth of an inaccessible wilderness lends risk culture its appeal and meaning, environmentalism can be re-defined by a different sensibility, one that values an array of bodies and a wider spectrum of positive ways to interact with nature. Thus, both today's adventure culture and the environmental movement from which it emerged are my targets: environmentalism is responsible for the ideas of fitness and wilderness that shape risk culture, and risk culture masks its corporeal unconscious behind environmentalism's moral legitimacy. I hope to disentangle this relationship and offer a more inclusive model of being in the world.

Adventure Culture and the Fit Body

In adventure culture, proving status through challenges and encounters with raw Nature is the best way to attain and display physical fitness, thereby achieving what might be termed a "wilderness body ideal." This notion is an extension of Krista Comer's definition of the "wilderness ideal plot," in which wilderness becomes a "space capable of reinvigorating masculine virility while staving off the emasculating tendencies of 'feminine' civilization" (219).

Comer reflects the robust scholarship critiquing the gendered implications of the wilderness retreat. Such scholarship attends to the ways in which wilderness parks were a response to a perceived “crisis of masculinity” at the turn of the century, and that the appeal of the aesthetics of a sublime, mountain-top transcendence could only be appealing to men in such a context. Similarly, scholars have argued that the “crisis of masculinity” is as much a crisis of white bourgeois identity as it is of gender and sexuality. Civilization could only be understood as “feminizing” in the Victorian era because of its unprecedented immigration, which turned the city into a socially “unhygienic” space. As Adam Rome has noted, cleaning up cities was a “domestic” chore for women like Jane Addams, while retreating from the city to the purifying wilderness was the privilege of the white male elite. The individual white male who escapes to the wilderness is thus a defining trope in wilderness culture and environmentalism.

The body on the cover of the July 2005 edition of *Rock and Ice* magazine exemplifies the wilderness body ideal (see Figure 1). It “testifies” to its audiences (who both “witness” and are “witnesses”) that the body is fit through practices of risk in the wilderness. The fit body is, figuratively and literally, external evidence of internal qualities. This cover illustrates the power of images of the body to signal internal moral authority.

The corporeality implied in the wilderness plot suggests the need for an analysis of the “wilderness body ideal,” which embodies virtue, select status, and, importantly, *genetic* superiority. The centrality of the body to the wilderness ideal invokes the historical relationship between social Darwinism and environmentalism on which my argument builds. Braun hints at these connections: “climbing the corporate ladder is akin to



Figure 1. *Rock and Ice* magazine cover: “Witness the Fitness”

climbing a mountain” and is “presented as something innate in the person [...and] also as a property that belongs to the physically superior specimen whose superiority is deserved” (199). The activities of adventure culture conflate bodily, social, economic, and genetic superiority. In Braun’s gloss of this Darwinian argument, the fit body tautologically reflects deserved genetic superiority.

The sports associated with outdoor adventure have taken varying forms since the inception of the appeal of “adventure” as a recreational activity. Braun explains, although “adventure has a long history in the United States,” it has “returned with renewed vigor in the last decades of the twentieth century.” Braun locates adventure culture in “the widespread dissemination of images of ‘risk taking’ in mainstream media and popular culture” (176),¹⁸ including popular magazines such as *Outside* and *National Geographic Adventurer*. Shows like “Survivor,” “Man Vs. Wild” and “Survivorman” claim to teach viewers how to survive extreme conditions, and the documentary *Touching the Void* (2003), which dramatized the harrowing mountaineering excursion of two British climbers that nearly killed them both, are good examples.

In the past, alpine clubs and mountaineering appealed because they promised escape and discovery. Today, the sport of climbing is precisely about risk-taking, not first ascents or merely experiencing the sublime. Nettlefold and Stratford contend that the popularity of risk-taking marks a shift away from the sublime view of nature, in which nature is awe-inspiring but not dangerous. In the Kantian sublime, nature is simultaneously beautiful and threatening, but the safety of the human figure is always ensured. In contemporary risk culture, by contrast, the “search for jeopardy” is paramount (Williams and Donnelly, 4). Difficulty is central to the appeal

¹⁸ Braun offers the term “risk culture” to describe “a set of discursive operations around risk and risk taking that help constitute, and render natural, risk society’s racial and class formations” (178-9). He uses the term “to call attention to the cultural and representational practices that produce risk as culturally meaningful” (178). I use the term here interchangeably with “adventure culture,” although I do want to retain the connotation the term “risk” implies about the role of risk culture in a “risk society” (Beck).

and status of climbing. In *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*, author and political commentator David Brooks sardonically observes the search for jeopardy in adventure sports: “One must put oneself through terrible torment—and this can come either on a cold mountain top or in a malarial rainforest—in order to experience the spiritually uplifting magnificence of brutal nature. One must mutilate the body for environmental transcendence” (210). In this passage, we can see that risk culture jeopardizes the very bodies it champions. Ironically, bodies “on the raggedy edge of risk,” as Braun puts it, are by definition in danger of disablement, since risk “mutilates the body,” yet environmental transcendence requires this corporeal experience. Just being in the outdoors—in the form of gardening or observing nature, for instance—does not offer the element of risk.

Descriptions of adventure culture frequently emphasize physical fitness and value the body but ignore the category of disability against which the adventuring body is defined. They illustrate the logic of what Mitchell and Snyder call the double bind: “While disabled populations are firmly entrenched on the outer margins of social power and cultural value, the disabled body serves as the raw material out of which other socially disempowered communities make themselves visible” (6). In other words, disabled bodies are simultaneously marginalized and the invisible, raw material from which the “normate” body, as Rosemarie Garland Thomson calls it, gains any meaning. The disabled body is made invisible by risk culture’s emphasis on fitness, yet risk culture relies on the threat of disability to make its disciplines meaningful. Even Braun’s excellent assessment of the racial unconscious of risk culture commits the double bind by overlooking the corporeal implications of Braun’s own argument: “Risk culture is seen to have an explicitly ethical dimension, involving a care of self that involves physical and mental tests, and demands an almost ascetic bodily discipline” (179). For Braun, risk culture “sutures” white, male, elite identity, but despite his reference to the importance of bodily discipline as self-care in this passage, he ignores the *able* body on which his argument about the *white* body relies. In the

theory of the double bind, the disabled body is simultaneously the most *absent*—even in critical assessments of risk culture such as Braun’s—and also the most *necessary* for reifying white bourgeois identity.

The double bind is evident in depictions of risk culture today, in which the disabled body’s presence is necessary yet invisible. Descriptions of adventure in magazines, survivor shows, and travel literature frequently depict the discomfort, harsh environment, and dangerous challenges the adventurer faces. Many advertisements for adventure technologies use the prospect of endangerment to sell gear. The ability to control risk, however, is a luxury available only to those with resources. Risk becomes appealing only to those who lack risk in daily life. Braun notes: “the freedom to take risks in nature is undoubtedly a white, middle-class privilege” (178), and signifies economic status. The double bind of risk culture becomes evident because risk in fact threatens disablement. An adventurer who is injured in the wild would become dependent on technological accommodations and support. The imminent possibility of disablement heightens the risk factor of all sports, but particularly outdoor adventure, where there are no trainers, ambulances, or hospitals nearby.

The rare instances of disabled bodies in risk culture captures this irony. An ACR advertisement campaign promotes Global Positioning Systems (GPS) by presenting images of disabled men alongside their narratives of survival. An analysis of the campaign suggests that disabled bodies signify the absolute opposite of the wilderness body ideal. The ACR Electronics’ Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) advertising campaign turns on the imminence of disability in the outdoors and on the shared assumption that the only place for the disabled body in the wilderness ideal is as an invisible, looming threat. While adventure culture valorizes independence and bodily integrity, it jeopardizes these very traits. The ads therefore reflect the double bind of disability in risk culture.

The first full-page advertisement (see Figure 2) includes a full-body image of Dan, standing on artificial legs, alongside text that tells his true story: “Dan got hopelessly lost for five days and eventually lost his legs to frostbite. Sheer willpower helped save his life amid overwhelming odds. It could have been worse. Or it could have been much better if Dan had packed ACR’s new TerraFix 406 GPS I/O.” Citing “physical prowess and willpower” (qualities Cosgrove linked to *fin-de-siecle* national character formation), this ad asserts that all that stood between Dan and death was his will power, but all that stood between him and keeping his legs was a GPS. Avoiding death is testament to the power of will; able-bodiedness is about personal virtue. At the same time, the ad exposes the implicit contradiction of adventure culture: the individual is at risk without the GPS, so the individual is dependent on technological aid to avoid becoming disabled and therefore reliant on aid. Technology helps reduce disability, yet relying on technology is itself something like a “disability,” as it threatens the self-reliance of the adventurer.



Figure 2. ACR Personal Locator Beacon Advertisement: Dan

To sell this technology, ACR must address the problem technology poses for the independent, self-reliant adventurer. A second full-page ad in the ACR campaign exemplifies how ACR glosses this contradiction (see Figure 3). In this ad, Aron Ralston is rock climbing with an artificial arm alongside a narrative of his story: “I’ve been to a place that no one ever wants to visit and I’ll never end up there again: Trapped and alone with no way out. With my right arm pinned under a half-ton boulder, I had no way to communicate my position. Five days later I walked out of Utah’s Blue John Canyon. I had to leave my arm behind. But I consider it a miracle, not a tragedy: My story has saved lives—it might save yours.”

The text continues to describe how important the PLB is for wilderness safety. In much larger print at the top of the page, Aron is quoted: “I still climb solo. Unless you count my PLB.” This statement allows us to rest assured that his dismemberment did not cause “disability,” at least in terms of how disability connotes dependence; Aron “still climb[s] solo.” We are also assured that the lightweight and “convenient” PLB will not compromise the independence and purity of the wilderness encounter: “I still climb solo, only now I carry a convenient 12-ounce backup by my side. You should too.” Unlike Dan, Aron’s placement in a wilderness setting reveals the extent to which independence is best achieved through wilderness adventure practices, such as rock climbing.

By taking such care to emphasize Aron’s independence despite his reliance on his PLB to avoid further disablement, this ad attests to the double bind of risk culture; dismemberment does not stop Aron, but he is proof that the risks are real. The PLB can help avoid disablement, but the status of the adventurer is preserved by reducing the mediating buffer of such technology. We are reassured that Aron’s disability does not get in the way of his independence, a point that is emphasized by the dynamic position of Aron’s body in the frame; he is literally transcending his environment and climbing out into the text. Aron’s exceptional recovery proves the rule that disability is feared because it is fundamentally about dependence—on other people and on technology. By foregrounding people with disabilities to promote reliance on technology, this ad campaign exposes adventure culture’s assumption that bodily ability and the virtue it signals can only be attained without the aid of technology—“solo.”



Figure 3. ACR Personal Locator Beacon Advertisement: Aron

Like the stories of Erik Wiehenmayer, the first blind man to scale Everest, or Rachael Scodris, the first blind woman to run the Iditarod, Dan's and Aron's narratives are examples of sensationalized "supercrip" stories, as disability theorists call them. Such narratives glorify individual will power to overcome bodily impairment. Thomson refers to supercrip stories as a "genre" that authorizes pity and amazement. Even as they re-narrate "tragedy" as "miracle," as in Aron's ACR ad statement, the corresponding responses are normalization, recovery, or cure. Thomson suggests that the "visual rhetoric" of images of the disabled simultaneously makes disability "visually conspicuous while politically and socially erased" (56). Because they imply that responsibility for cure lies in the individual, supercrip narratives express the double bind of disability in risk culture. As Thomson adds, "the disabled body exposes the illusion of autonomy, self-government, and self-determination that underpins the fantasy of absolute able-bodiedness" (46). They thus signal risk culture's attachment to the able-body. Despite their ostensible aim—to show that people with disabilities can do the same things that people without disabilities can do—supercrip stories reinforce rather than challenge the dominant values of ableism: independence, the role of individual will in self-cure or self-recovery, and bodily self-reliance.

The prevalence of narratives about supercrips in adventure culture in particular supports my argument that disabled bodies signify not just the opposite of the abled body, but the abled body *in the wild*. People with disabilities who accomplish extreme outdoor feats capture headlines precisely because disabled bodies are understood as incapable of physically demanding activities. A "disability panic" underpins risk culture. If the wilderness encounter is defined by the fact that it requires more extreme physical fitness than any other activity, then the disabled body literally has no place in the wilderness.¹⁹ In the wilderness myth, the body is pure, "solo,"

¹⁹ The tension between disabled access to wilderness and the myth that wilderness should be free of mediating traces of built society is captured in an article titled "Trailblazing in a Wheelchair—An Oxymoron?" (*Palaestra*) by Joe Huber. Huber asks: "shouldn't minimum impact to the environment and safety of all those involved be balanced equally with one's right to access?" The notion of disabled people

left to its own devices, and unmediated by any kind of aid. Its role is to activate jeopardy in the able-bodied as a “disablist presence” that waits just beyond the next extreme thrill. Toni Morrison’s theory of the “Africanist presence” in American literature provides a model for the “absent presence” of the disabled figure in literature. That is, just as the “major and championed characteristics of our national literature” are in fact “responses to a dark, abiding, signing Africanist presence” (5), the presence of disability in adventure culture and environmental thought “exposes the illusion” (as Thomson put it) of able-bodiedness. The perpetual threat of disablement is only heightened by the absent presence of an adventurer who has been disabled by those very activities. However inspiring and heroic, their stories reinforce the audience’s membership in the able-bodied wilderness ideal. After all, Aron “still climb[s] solo.”

Historical Roots: Ecology, Eugenics, and Empire

Risk culture’s privileging of independence, will power, bodily fitness, and wilderness borrow much from early environmentalism and from the wilderness movement of the Progressive Era. Examining these roots further exposes the extent to which today’s risk culture extends a longer tradition of anxieties about the body, which were directly related to the overlap of social, genetic, spatial, and hygienic concerns of the time. The rapid growth of cities, changing labor relations, an unprecedented influx of immigrants, and concern about the “close of the frontier”—popularized by Turner’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition “frontier thesis” speech—led to a series of perceived crises of masculinity, nature, and national identity. At the same time, the

“trailblazing” in the wilderness is oxymoronic because of the implicit assumption that wilderness activities are precisely only available to those with fit, abled bodies. But even Huber fails to see the contradiction in his own language; “trailblazing” is inherently damaging to the environment in the first place. It is only deemed acceptable for abled-bodies because of the myth that trailblazing is about independence and escape from technological mediation. But trailblazing with a wheelchair crosses a line because the technology involved signifies dependence. My point is that this line is arbitrary because trailblazing—with or without a wheelchair—is un-ecological. The appeal of trailblazing is to fortify ableist values of independence and conquest.

emerging theory of social evolution, which saw interactions between racial groups as a struggle for survival, provided a “national” narrative that united “America” (at least white America) against other races and cultures (Bederman; Haraway; Kosek). Because Progressive Era conservationists were beginning to see the environmental costs of modernity, “civilization” could only advance by combining the qualities of progress with man’s primal strengths. In this context, returning to “the primitive,” “going Native,”²⁰ and “getting back to nature” rendered wilderness an attractive setting in which to spend leisure time.

For advocates like Theodore Roosevelt, wilderness was a setting in which the young, virile, American male could practice the “savage” arts of war, hunting, and a raw masculinity. The increasing popularity of Darwinian evolutionary theory coincided with various social “crises” to help shape the value of wilderness and inform “biologized forms of racism” (Foucault). The loss of the frontier and the “social hygiene” problems associated with urban spaces were in large part responsible for the wilderness movement of the late nineteenth century. Ensuring national “health” meant enclosing wilderness spaces and honing the fit body.²¹ Indeed, Progressive Era wilderness ideology *spatialized* national sentiment through the fortification of American borders, expansion of territorial boundaries, and enclosure of land as “wilderness” against inferior intruders. And the wilderness ideology was *internalized* in the form of disciplines of the body that merged the health and appearance of individual bodies with the health of the national body politic.

²⁰ Shari Huhndorf examines this expression in *Going Native: Indians in the Cultural Imagination*. Kevin Costner used the expression “going Native” to describe his 1990 box-office hit *Dances with Wolves*, in which his character returns to the frontier following the Civil War to recover, not coincidentally, from a war injury, further reiterating the relationship between discourses of ableism and the frontier myth.

²¹ For more on how spending time in wilderness became understood as a “cure” for psychological and physical maladies, see Harvey Green’s chapter on “The Sanitation Movement and the Wilderness Cure” in *Fit for America*.

Jake Kosek finds that Turner's frontier thesis is "perhaps the most influential origin story of American nationalism [that] grows out of these persistent connections" between "nation, blood, body, and 'wild' nature in America" (132). Turner argued that the confrontation inherent in the frontier encounter—the encounter between civilization and the wild—created a uniquely American character, defined by rugged individualism, "good" Anglo-Saxon genetic stock, and values of democratic governance. Turner's thesis justified Manifest Destiny on teleological, evolutionary grounds: "it appears then that the universal disposition of Americans to emigrate to the western wilderness, in order to enlarge their dominion over inanimate nature, is the actual result of the expansive power which is inherent in them" (Turner, qtd. in Kosek, 133). In this logic, European Americans possessed an "inherent power" to expand and dominate nature, which was perceived as inanimate and uninhabited. This rationale also conveniently justified the domination of Native Americans. Conquest and dominance were about racial survival; *not* to expand and dominate would go against Anglo instincts and Darwinian necessity, leading to what Theodore Roosevelt called "race suicide" (Horsman). With the close of the frontier declared in the early 1890s, Turner worried that the American character itself was endangered.

Historians of wilderness in America attribute the origin of the wilderness movement to the desire to preserve American "space" that resulted from the close of the frontier. For example, Cronon writes, "It is no accident that the movement to set aside national parks and wilderness areas began to gain real momentum at precisely the time that laments about the passing frontier reached their peak" (76-7). If the "real" frontier no longer existed, the experience of the frontier encounter could be artificially recreated. Wilderness spaces allowed the elite to foster the superior strengths of American character that the frontier once furnished. Turner's thesis made wilderness preservation essential to American national and genetic viability.

Environmental determinism backed Darwin and Turner; the success of the Anglo-American "race" required imperial expansion, resting American genetic superiority on territorial

appropriation. Progressive Era evolutionists posited evolution not as a matter of natural selection, but as a matter of “survival of the fittest.” This notion revised Darwin’s thesis to emphasize dominance over natural selection. Further, in the logic of the “survival of the fittest,” fitness could be understood on the scale of *national* identity, as opposed to the *species*, as Darwin had theorized. Thus, protected territories were not meant for *all* members of the human species, much less for all members of the American nation. Progressive Era social Darwinists would use this new vision of evolutionary theory to justify imperialism, racism, strict anti-immigrant measures, eugenics, and wilderness protection. Along with dramatically increased restrictions on immigration, urban hygiene programs, and the City Beautiful movement, wilderness protection was implemented under the auspices of “social reform.” As Lawrence Buell argues, “the first expressions of protectionist sentiment about vanishing woods and wilderness on the part of the dominant settler culture [...] coincided with the first intensive systematic push toward urban ‘sanitary’ reform” (p. 8). Anxiety about urban hygiene manifested simultaneously in the construction of wilderness spaces, as is particularly evident in the career of Frederick Law Olmsted, who both designed Yosemite National Park and promoted green spaces, such as Central Park, in cities. The example of Olmsted shows how discourses of purity/pollution united social and environmental causes, giving policies of social control scientific, even medical, authority. Race and class prejudices could be justified as reasonable and necessary responses to social “contagion.”

Shared concerns about what was happening to urban spaces, manhood, and nature came together in the Progressive Era under the rubric of what Buell calls “toxic discourse.” Drawing on both Ulrich Beck’s theory of “risk society” and Mary Douglas’ theory of “purity,” “dirt,” and “taboo,” toxic discourse “aris[es] both from individual or social panic and from an evidential base in environmental phenomena” (Buell, 31). Understood as a response to the fear of toxicity, the wilderness movement can be seen as an attempt to craft a “purification machine,” to use Braun’s

term, that could alleviate the “unnaturalness,” “dirtiness,” and impurity of an increasing population of racial “others” in cities. These anxieties helped to justify containment of Native Americans in reservations and enclosure of land in the form of wilderness (Jacoby).

Immigration, eugenics, and environmental protection comprised a three-pronged approach to fears of “National Deterioration” (Kevles, 40). Eugenics became a popular and scientific approach to distinguishing between people who belonged within America’s privileged boundaries and those who threatened its superiority. Eugenics also helped construct disability as well as race as meaningful categories (Selden). Both racial and ableist fears were seen as genetic threats from the outside (from immigrants), and from genetic faults from within (disability). Detecting “bad” genes within a white population became a domestic policy in its own right, leading to Family Fitness programs, popular media productions linking bad genes to crime fed by debates about social welfare, contraception, and eugenics. “Eugenics sidestepped the period’s intensively enforced racial divisions,” Daylanne K. English argues, “precisely because it engaged forms of modern identity other than race” (16).

Eugenicists were concerned about less visible threats to white genetic superiority from within the white population itself. Genetics became a guise for exclusion and worse, medical experimentation, along both racial and ableist lines in the name of purity. For example, eugenicists pushed for immigration restriction not to exclude entire national groups, but to deny “entry to individuals and families with poor hereditary history” (Kevles, 47). Immigration restriction based on genetics, as opposed to race, used biological arguments against non-Anglo groups, constructing racial inferiority as disability, as Kevles notes:

high scientific authority [...] drew upon expert ‘evidence’ [...] to proclaim that a large proportion of immigrants bordered on or fell into the ‘feeble-minded’ category and that their continued entrance into the country made [...] for the ‘menace of race deterioration’ (Kevles, 94).

Eugenics pushed racial agendas, to be sure, but it did so through discourses of genetic “flaws”—disabilities. Immigration restriction provided “positive eugenics”—preventing external sources of impurity—and sterilization provided “negative eugenics”—preventing the reproduction of the genetically defective. By the 1920s, eugenicist sentiments led to the Immigration Act of 1924 and to forced sterilization of thirty-six thousand white and non-white Americans, deemed “criminals,” “drunkards,” “diseased,” “feeble-minded,” and “disabled” from 1907-1941 (Kevles, 116). These eugenicist approaches to social reform framed xenophobia as a biological imperative to gain legitimacy.

In such a context, it makes sense that eugenics’ early proponents called it “biological housecleaning” (Kevles, 114). Ernst Haeckel, the German zoologist considered to be the founder of modern ecology, was engaged in discussions of eugenics as early as 1868, favoring death for the “unfit” long before eugenics gained public support (Pernick, 99). Environmental and eugenics projects reinforced each other: early environmentalists wanted to dictate who belonged on America’s precious soil. Echoing Serlo in Chapter II, the “purity” of American land was linked to the purity of its American genes. Examples of the overlapping interests of eugenics and conservation abound. Walt Whitman, a canonical proto-environmentalist figure, asked “What has miserable, inefficient Mexico...to do [...] with the great mission of peopling the New World with a noble race?” (qtd. in Horsman, 235).²²

As early as the mid-late 1800s, “prophet of environmentalism” George Perkins Marsh was drawing on Social Darwinian logic to advance both ecological and racial ideals. Marsh exemplified how ideas about the purity of both land and bodies underwrote early environmentalism. Marsh’s biographer, David Lowenthal, explains why Marsh is considered a

²² For more on Whitman’s views of corporeal and national fitness, see Robert J. Scholnick, “How Dare a Sick Man or an Obedient Man Write Poems?: Whitman and the Dis-ease of the Perfect Body.” Scholnick writes, “In promoting physical health as a means of fostering national stability, control, and improvement, Whitman excluded those lacking the best blood” (249).

“prophet of environmentalism”: “at a time when the United States was moving at breakneck speed to industrialize and develop the national economy by exploiting the wealth of natural resources to the fullest, Marsh’s was a lonely voice cautioning against the risk of careless growth” (x). Marsh was prescient in his call for checks to industrialism. In accounts like Lowenthal’s, which reflect the accepted figure of Marsh as proto-environmentalist, Marsh’s environmental alarmism hides his racism. But Lowenthal’s description fails to address that fact that, to Marsh, New Mexico and California were:

inhabited by a mixed population, of habits, opinions, and characters incapable of sympathy or assimilation with our own; a race, whom the experience of an entire generation has proved to be unfitted for self-government, and unprepared to appreciate, sustain, or enjoy free institutions. (Marsh, qtd. in Horsman, 182).

Marsh’s racial views are not included in his environmental legacy. I would argue that this absence is a result not simply of the inability of a contemporary audience to square Marsh’s racial and environmental views, or even of the desire to emphasize his environmental contributions over his less savory social views. Rather, such interpretations ignore—even excuse—the complementariness of environmental and racist sentiments. This link is part of a legacy that the contemporary environmental movement still struggles to reconcile. Marsh demonstrates how concerns about environmental protection and concerns about threats to an American racial purity were inextricably linked.

In her classic essay, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy,” Donna Haraway examines how eugenics and conservation overlapped “in philosophy and personnel” (57). Haraway analyzes the synergy between eugenics and conservation through the Museum of Natural History, which was “dedicated to preserving a threatened manhood.” While “conservation was a policy to preserve resources, not only for industry, but also for moral formation, for the achievement of manhood” (ibid.), natural history was “medical technology, a hygienic intervention” for a “pathology [that]

was a potentially fatal organic sickness of the individual and collective body” (55). Haraway argues that Roosevelt understood conquest of the frontier as proof that white men were evolutionarily superior to Indians, which allowed him to justify both the establishment of wilderness parks in the U.S. and imperial expansion in the Philippines and Cuba.²³ For Roosevelt, Manifest Destiny became aligned with “holy evolutionary advancement” (Bederman). Roosevelt was echoing Anglo-Saxon leaders from the Mexican War, who espoused a “bellicose racialism” that demanded Americans to “obey our destiny and blood” (William Gilmore Simms, qtd. in Horsman, 166).²⁴ Because of “the dog-eat-dog nature of the relationships between races and between countries,” a nation would “fall a prey to an inferior but more energetic neighbor” if it “ceases to extend its sway” (167).

John Higham attests to how nation-building, racism, and Social Darwinism fused in this period:

By picturing all species as both the products and the victims of a desperate, competitive struggle for survival, Darwinism suggested a warning: the daily peril of destruction confronts every species. Thus the evolutionary theory, when fully adopted by race-thinkers, not only impelled them to anchor their national claims to a biological basis; it also provoked anxiety by denying assurance that the basis would endure. (135)

Roosevelt took up these values, and saw male virility, violence, and the wilderness encounter as necessary for civilized men to ensure their superiority over other groups. Because “the men of

²³ For more on Roosevelt and American empire, see Richard Slotkin, “Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt’s Myth of the Frontier” and Amy Kaplan, “Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s.” Kaplan expands on the role of what Perry Miller called America’s “errand into the wilderness” in justifying expansion in “Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture.”

²⁴ Horsman outlines the debate between those who viewed expansion as a threat to racial purity (such as Emerson) and those who viewed it as an evolutionary imperative. Although there was no one coherent view, the debate centered on discourses of “bio-power”; power residing in “species dominance” could arguably come from expansion or isolationism, depending on your view of evolution.

the masterful white American race had an irresistible evolutionary imperative to assert control over any race of inferior men in their midst” (Bederman, 197), Roosevelt romanticized the violence of the frontier encounter as proof that white men were evolutionarily superior to Indians, and justified imperial expansion in the Philippines and Cuba.

Some wilderness historians have seen the connections between conservation and eugenics, but there is less focus on the corporeal nature of this connection. Roosevelt spatialized notions of bodily fitness, Social Darwinism, and national identity to the American landscape in the form of national parks and protected areas, but he simultaneously located these values on the individual body. Rescuing masculinity involved “wresting the continent from Indians and installing a higher civilization” (182). But as Bryant Simon attests, it also meant maintaining a fit and healthy body. Health and physical fitness emerged as important priorities in the Progressive Era, and fitness corresponded to “nature” in two ways: fitness was evolutionary nature at its best, and evolutionary fitness, according to Roosevelt’s followers, was best practiced in nature, or wilderness. This “natural man” view of fitness is responsible for the development of mountaineering and alpine clubs (Williams and Donnelly; Nettlefold and Stratford), the Boone and Crocket Club, the Boy Scouts of America, and the emergence of adventure culture as a recreational activity for the leisure class.²⁵ Once Teddy Roosevelt headed West to recover his own masculinity, Simon argues, “national glory, wide-open spaces, and powerful bodies were [...] forever linked” (84). It is no coincidence that Roosevelt advocated for the purification of the

²⁵ The youth were a specific target (Simon; Haraway; Selden). A popular eugenicist family film, *The Black Stork*, for example, depicted images of young boys doing physical fitness activities in natural settings. Nature was deployed as setting for the disciplining of fit bodies, further linking ideas of what is “natural” to “nature” (Pernick, 93). Young women were also a target, but they were not framed in nature, further attesting to the link between wilderness and *masculinity* in this era. Women’s professional lives could only progress to the extent that they did not compromise the national good. Women’s reproductive responsibility thus curtailed their professional options, and actually reinforced their domestic duties (English). As the nation’s mothers, women’s bodies were enlisted as the foundation of national identity formation and the maintenance a pure American heritage. As future patriotic mothers, young girls were encouraged to maintain physical fitness through feminine activities, such as gymnastics (Chisholm). Such activities were the feminine counterpart to outdoor adventure activities for young white boys.

individual body as a justification for preserving wilderness.²⁶ Gail Bederman argues that for Roosevelt, outdoor activity—what he called “the strenuous life”—practiced a fantasy of raw masculine identity endangered by the feminizing work of modern society.

Roosevelt, like Haeckel and Marsh, thus exemplifies how the roots of ecology are “tangled up with much of the unsavory racial and eugenic theorizing of the early twentieth century” (Cosgrove, 38). On the surface, then, it would seem a paradox that the very people who founded the tradition of American natural history, ecology, and the wilderness movement, such as Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Haeckel, Marsh, and Roosevelt, would also be those who were most strident in their concerns about racial purity. Foucault’s theory of bio-power helps explain how the seemingly progressive politics of wilderness preservation and the repressive policies of national purity could be part of the same impulse. We can understand Whitman and Roosevelt’s emphasis on the body as gestures of bio-power. Foucault explains:

The emphasis on the body would undoubtedly be linked to the process of growth and establishment of bourgeois hegemony: not however, because of the market value assumed by labor capacity, but because of what the ‘cultivation’ of its own body could represent politically, economically, and historically for the present and the future of the bourgeoisie. Its dominance was in part dependent on that cultivation; but it was not simply a matter of economy or ideology, it was a ‘physical’ matter as well. (p. 125)

The body becomes an apparatus of the state through discourses of species survival: “wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity” (Foucault, 137). Bio-power only necessitates genocide “because

²⁶ Roosevelt’s focus on the young male body as a site of national integrity was consistent with his historical moment, as Rail and Harvey argue. At this time, “sportization,” as they call it, disciplined individual bodies and mobilized the population (171). Sports legitimized a “matrix of bodily surveillance technologies” (172) that helped produce the “deviant body” (173). Again, we see that the construction of the “fit” body at this moment coincided with the construction of “disability” as the deviant body.

power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population” (ibid.). Bio-power places the burden of species survival on individual biology and understands survival in terms of population dynamics: as Rabinow explains it, “the disciplines of the body and regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed” (262). Bio-power accounts for why, “from the mid-eighteenth century on,” dominant classes were occupied with “a ‘class’ body with its health, hygiene, descent, and race” (Foucault, 124).

Horsman’s description of the era of American expansion supports Foucault: “The tide of the American population, with no violence or spirit of conquest, would transform both North and South America” (Horsman, 255). The body of the nation would be crafted to be as superior and “fit” as possible according to the laws of natural selection. Natural evolution could explain the expansion of the American population, rendering violence and conquest obsolete, or at least invisible. Nineteenth-century imperialist rhetoric assumed that “wars of extermination were not needed,” as one 1855 journalist claimed, “because superior races simply have the commercial power to secure for themselves the largest share of the means of subsistence” (qtd. in Horsman, 291). The logic confuses causality; superior races gained power not because they exerted domination, but rather they are racially superior because they have commercial power, and they will continue to acquire commercial power because they have it already. This statement attests to this logic’s Malthusian influence, suggested in the language of “means of subsistence.”²⁷ These historical statements regarding America’s natural territorial expansion reflect the logic of bio-power in naturalizing genetic domination.

²⁷ “Means of subsistence” is also Marxian. Like Darwin, Marx looked to Malthus to explain the “contradictions” of capitalism. Given Malthus’ theory of the tension between population growth and resource availability, capitalism would be checked by its own depletion of resources. Eco-Marxist theorist James O’Connor termed this self-defeating feature of capitalism “the second contradiction of capitalism.”

Thomas Malthus' 1798 *An Essay on the Principle of Population* contributed a key logic to this combination. It forwarded what is now accepted wisdom: populations could outgrow their resources and therefore undermine their viability. Malthus wrote, "The power of population is so superior to the power of the earth to produce subsistence for man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race." Darwin's theory of natural selection explicitly rested on Malthus' theory. Darwin acknowledges Malthus in *On the Origin of Species*, in which he explains that his theory "is the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms. [...] Although some species may be now increasing, more or less rapidly, in numbers, all cannot do so, for the world would not hold them" (117). Darwin thus grants scientific authority to what was, for Malthus, only social observation. They both saw a causal relationship between population growth and resource availability. But causality fails to account for political and economic structures of resource distribution, from colonialism to capitalism, which have contributed as much to a population's access to resources as their numbers. So, while there might exist a correlation between population growth and resource scarcity, Darwin's use of Malthus began a tradition of spatial anxiety about resource "scarcity" discourse that continues today. Turner's frontier thesis and the anxieties it reflected similarly rested on Malthusian logic, which spatialized social anxiety by defining survival as a function of access to resources and space as a "safety valve."

Backed by this combination of Darwinian, Malthusian, and Turnerian environmental determinism, the growth of the Anglo-American population necessitated imperial expansion, linking American genetic superiority to territorial appropriation. Turner's thesis justified Manifest Destiny on teleological, evolutionary grounds: "it appears then that the universal disposition of Americans to emigrate to the western wilderness, in order to enlarge their dominion over inanimate nature, is the actual result of the expansive power which is inherent in them" (Turner, qtd. in Kosek, 133). Against Darwin and Malthus, though, Progressive Era evolutionists

posited evolution not as a matter of natural selection, but as a matter of “survival of the fittest”; genetic fitness thus became tied to aggression, competition, and dominance. And, also against Darwin’s theory,²⁸ this fitness was understood to apply to a *national*, as opposed to species, scale. “The eugenic principle of selection on the basis of individual biological and mental quality,” Kevles writes, “had been submerged in a principle of racial- or ethnic-group selection” (94-5). This contortion of evolutionary theory, which some historians now refer to as sociobiology or “scientific racialism” (Horsman; Gould), thus justified territorial expansion and the securing of resources for the American population as necessary for survival.²⁹ But these environmental protections were not meant for *all* Americans. Progressive Era social Darwinists would use this new version of evolutionary theory to justify imperialism, racism, strict anti-immigrant measures, eugenics, and wilderness protection.

The “scientific racism” of the Progressive Era thus did not just have racist and imperialist consequences. Because the ideas disseminated by Malthus, Darwin, and Turner were inflected by environmental determinism, Progressive Era scientific racism had spatial and environmental consequences. Wilderness thus served as both a space in which the American character could be practiced and as a “safety valve” of space and resources that would make it possible for an

²⁸ The theory of “survival of the fittest” was advanced by Herbert Spencer, not Darwin. Unlike Darwin’s theory of natural selection, the theory of the survival of the fittest inflects evolutionary progress with a moral valence and therefore justifies human interference with it. Also, to apply the rules of a species’ survival to a subgroup of one species—a nation, for example—further contorts Darwin’s theory. Indeed, Darwin’s theories were contested, and lent to as many liberatory politics as repressive ones (such as the breaking down of economic or gender-based barriers as “unnatural” blocks to evolution). Some social Darwinians rejected government interference with evolution on the grounds that interference defeated the purpose of natural selection and that the fittest would be “destined to survive.” Thus, Darwin’s theories were interpreted in often conflicting ways that are beyond the scope of this paper. I restrict my discussion here to the impact of Darwin on policy and public sentiment to elucidate the relationship between nationalism, eugenics, and wilderness preservation.

²⁹ The terms “social Darwinism,” “evolutionary theory,” “sociobiology,” and “scientific racialism” are not interchangeable and suggest varying interpretations of Darwinian theory. Sociobiologists today would not consider their theories “racist,” although for more on this debate see Gould (1973, 253-259; 1981, 326-7), Richard Lewontin’s *Biology as Ideology*, and E.O. Wilson’s *Sociobiology*. I use historians’ preferred terms, “evolutionist” or “social Darwinist” to attempt to avoid being anachronistic by projecting current debates about sociobiology onto the past.

American nation—understood in “species” terms—to be able to thrive. Progressive Era crises became *spatialized* in the form of solidifying American borders, expanding boundaries, and enclosing wilderness, and *internalized*, in the form of “technologies of the body” that elided individual bodies with the national body politic.

Another reason that the body was central to the Progressive Era’s response to industrialism was because industrial capitalism’s new forms of labor reduced the bodily risks of everyday work for many. City life in particular, Elizabeth Rosen explains, created conditions that made adventure a preferred form of leisure. She locates the roots of contemporary risk culture in the introduction of technology. “With its urbanity,” modern civilization “is so safe compared with life centuries ago. More and more, risk [was] filtered out. [...] Our world is largely explored and there are no nasty surprises waiting over the next hill for us. Our technology erases more and more hardship from our lives” (152). Putting one’s body through great discomfort became a prescription for attaining transcendence or virtue because it allowed the privileged to manufacture risk as a form of leisure.

Dean MacCannell adds that the desire to manufacture risk in leisure activities became a feature of bourgeois recreation. Precipitated by the Industrial Revolution, adventure tourism became an example of what MacCannell calls “work displays.” The hard physical “work” of outdoor adventure constitutes “leisure” because work itself no longer risks the bourgeois body. “Strangely, we find ourselves in the midst of an age that has turned notions of ‘recreation’ on its head,” Rosen concludes, “when leisure activities have come to include hard-driving and perilous extreme sports and adventure holidays such as rock climbing, sky surfing, and extreme white water rafting” (147). Work displays corrected the moral atrophy associated with bourgeois privilege; they fulfilled a Puritan work ethic through bodily toil. And wilderness was the best place to express this ethic, as environmental historian Paul Sutter argues: “if virtuous labor in

nature was no longer the dominant force of American character, structured leisure in an edifying environment promised to fill the void” (291).

It is within this historical context, in which the purity of the body and the nation lead to wilderness, eugenics, and imperialism, that the disabled American body gains meaning. Evolutionary theory was deployed for the purposes of disciplining American bodies as much as for the purposes of imperial expansion and wilderness protection. The relationship between the fit body, national identity, and wilderness that emerged in the Progressive Era ensured that unfit bodies were both a threat to national identity and to Nature itself. In an era increasingly interested in the rationalization of labor and economic models of efficiency, the disabled body had no place.

Disability was defined by the inability to contribute productively to the capitalist system, to the body politic, and therefore to society. “Nowhere is the disabled figure more troubling to American ideology and history,” notes Rosemarie Garland Thomson, “than in relation to the concept of work,” which assumes “abstract principles of self-government, autonomy, and progress” (46). The disabled figure could only exist in a context where self-government, autonomy, and progress were prized. The term “disability” itself implies the failure to meet a standard of *physical* competency, the standards for which were increasingly being defined in the *fin-de-siecle* industrial capitalist milieu. Only in such a context is it imaginable that the body that cannot perform the actions of “disciplining, optimization of its capabilities, extortion of its forces, parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, [and] integration into systems of efficient and economic controls” (Rabinow, 261), becomes a liability.

Although historians of disability attribute the construction of disability to the capitalist work ethic, few make the link between the wilderness movement and disability. By mapping the historical construction of wilderness alongside the historical construction of disability, I am arguing that there is a material, constitutive relationship between disability and American

environmental thought and practice. That is, if the wilderness movement was responsible for imbuing the fit body with values of independence, self-reliance, genetic superiority, and will power, and if wilderness was the setting in which to rehearse these values and reify the fit and healthy body, then “wilderness” and “disability” are constitutively constructed.

The Disabled Body in Environmental Thought

This historical relationship between disability and wilderness helps explain how disability came to “stand” for alienation from nature in so much literary and cultural production. It is striking that the disablist presence is most evident in texts considered proto-environmentalist, where disability is the category of “otherness” against which environmentalism is defined. Adventure culture borrows from environmentalism its rejection of modernity as technology. It shares the view that humans have been disconnected from a simpler, unmediated, corporeal relationship to the earth. “Ability” is about *not* relying on technology, society, or others’ help; independence is understood at the level of the body. Environmental literature’s anxiety about the fate of nature gets expressed as an anxiety about the body. The view that the environmental crisis is really a crisis of the body stems from the environmentalist aversion to “the machine,” which destroyed nature as resource, nature as a space of retreat and regeneration, and nature as an organic system in its own right. Because risk culture borrows environmentalism’s aversion to the machine, and because disability so often symbolizes dependence on machines in environmental literature, examining the roots of this aversion is central to a disability critique of risk culture. A disability studies critique of environmental thought best proceeds from an understanding of how values of independence, self-reliance, and environmentalism emerged in opposition to technology.

Some texts that take up environmental themes of the body are central to the American literary canon. Disability literary critics have argued that, for example, Herman Melville’s *Moby*

Dick portrays Ahab's disability as a punishment for his corrupt, instrumental view of nature. Melville captures Ahab's alienation from nature in Ahab's megalomaniacal pursuit of Moby Dick, the white whale. Ahab's corrupted relationship to nature is symbolized by disability—his lost leg. As the captain of a whaling ship, Ahab symbolizes industrialization's extractive relationship to nature. His bodily incompleteness signals his utilitarian orientation to nature, and justice is served by the ironic use of a whale bone for his prosthesis. Using disability as a metaphor, Ralph Waldo Emerson also invoked the image of the "invalid." For Emerson, the invalid was an "icon of bodily vulnerability" against which the self-reliant, ideal "man" should be defined (qtd. in Thomson, 2). In *Angle of Repose*, Wallace Stegner portrays protagonist Lyman Ward's paralysis as symbolic of humanity's malaise, disenchantment, and having been "maimed away from Mother Earth" (Hepworth, 17). These texts reflected concerns about the spread of technology, the loss of an Edenic nature, and the impact of these losses on humans. Such losses posed a threat to the notion of a distinct, self-reliant and yet innocent American national identity. "As modernization proceeded," Thomson observes, "the disabled figure shouldered in new ways society's anxiety about its inability to retain the status and old meanings of labor in the face of industrialization and increasing economic and social chaos" (47). From an ecocritical perspective, we might add that the disabled body shouldered society's anxieties about the effects of these forces on the human relationship to nature.

The disability-equals-alienation-from-nature trope re-emerged powerfully in 1963 in a book that is considered canonical to outdoor enthusiasts. In *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*, author and environmentalist Edward Abbey offers a "polemic against industrial tourism," in which he disparages the machines associated with it: jetskis, motorized boats, RVs, all-terrain vehicles. These machines defeat the purpose of being in the wilderness, making nature *too* accessible and at the same time distancing humans from the "wilderness experience." Machines disrupt the peace of the outdoors, and deaden the human body's ability to perceive and

respond to nature. Thus Abbey asks “how to pry the tourists out of their automobiles, out of their back-breaking upholstered mechanized wheelchairs and onto their feet, onto the strange warmth and solidity of Mother Earth again” (64). In other places, Abbey explicitly states that disabled people should not be granted the privilege of being in the wilderness if they cannot access it physically. His desire to keep the disabled body out of the wilderness highlights the centrality of disability to the logic of wilderness in U.S. environmentalism. Modernity as machine has handicapped us by breaking the connection to nature that only our bodies can make. Getting back to nature requires leaving the modern machines behind.

Abbey’s wilderness as a place free of technological interference extends the tradition of the pastoral in environmental literature, a tradition Leo Marx explores in *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. Marx describes how “the machine” became the antithesis of true “nature”: “industrialization, represented by images of machine technology, provides the counterforce in the American archetype of the pastoral design” (26). The pastoral setting creates a modern Eden, where man can “recover from the fall” (Merchant). The pastoral mode stigmatizes the city as “toxic” and constructs the “garden” as morally purifying. These texts hinge on the symbol of disability as the result of the body’s relationship to nature corrupted by the machine.

Current environmental thought builds on this literary tradition. Like Abbey, many contemporary wilderness advocates believe that technologies from automobiles to wristwatches distort the sensual relationship between self and environment. They get in the way of the body’s ability to perceive nature. The environmental crisis is portrayed in corporeal terms; an environmental ethic can only be achieved by returning to the intact body. To craft his environmental ethic, Paul Adams relies on Abbey’s assertion that walking is “the one and only mode of locomotion in which a man proceeds entirely on his own, upright, as a human being should be, fully erect rather than sitting on his rear end” (qtd. in Adams, 195). It is only by

“walking through [...] environment” that “a kind of rhythmic harmonization” can “produce a heightened sensitivity to the environment, as well as a heightened or special sense of self” (193).

Adams’s contemporary ethic is deeply indebted to the literary tradition I described above:

To climb and descend a hill on foot is therefore to establish a kind of dialogue with the earth, a direct imprinting of place on self; this physical dialogue becomes silent when one moves by merely pressing on a gas pedal. In peripatetic place-experience lies the basis of a special kind of knowledge of the world and one’s place in it. (188).

This suggests that able-bodiedness is necessary for a healthy human life in the natural world, for a “direct imprinting of place on self.” For Adams, the ideal “multisensory” experience is a “peripatetic place-experience.”

Contemporary eco-psychology adopts an environmental ethic of corporeal wholeness as well. Eco-psychologist Laura Sewall, for instance, attributes the environmental crisis of our age to a lack of bodily wholeness. Humanity’s distance from nature is “muteness” and “cultural blindness.” She further writes:

The ecological crisis reflects a crisis in perception; we are not truly seeing, hearing, tasting, or consequently feeling where we are. Our blindness has tremendous implications for the quality of relationship between ourselves and the “more-than-human-world.” (246).

Like Calabazas in *Almanac*, Sewall uses blindness as a metaphor to argue that we cannot care about the environment because we do not *perceive* it correctly, fundamentally a corporeal deficiency. Her use of disability is another example of the disablist presence in environmental thought: panic about the environment is really panic about the body. For Sewall, alienation from nature is (and is *like*) a disability. She echoes the general move within environmental philosophy to emphasize a corporeal environmental ethic. After all, as prominent eco-phenomenologist David Abrams poses, “direct sensuous reality [...] remains the sole solid touchstone for an

experiential world, [...] only in regular contact with the tangible ground and sky can we learn how to orient and to navigate in the multiple dimensions that now claim us” (x). Only contact with “the tangible ground and sky” and moving away from the artificial pleasures and simulacra can bring about the sensuous connection needed for harmony between humans and their environment.

This environmental philosophy based on corporeal experience is not only being expressed in philosophical discussions; it resonates in popular expressions of risk culture as well, demonstrating its appeal. “Man Vs. Wild” star and host Bear Grylls echoes this move in environmental philosophy in *Bear Grylls Born Survivor: Survival Techniques from the Most Dangerous Places on Earth*, in which he articulates the fantasy of an unmediated encounter with wilderness only available through the body:

It is only when I return to these so-called ‘wilds’ of nature that I find my own spirit comes alive. I begin to feel that rhythm within me, my senses become attuned to what is all around; I start to see in the dark, to distinguish the smells of the forest, to discern the east wind from the westerly. I am simply becoming a man again; becoming how nature made us. These ‘wildernesses’ help me lose all those synthetic robes that society has draped over us. (8).

Grylls’ emphasis on heightened bodily perception licenses his authenticity. Adventure removes from the body society’s “synthetic robes,” which above all inhibit sensual connection to the world. But by putting “wilds” and “wildernesses” in quote marks, Grylls exposes a fissure in the wilderness myth; the very spaces that allow him to shed the “robes” of society are themselves socially constructed, even to Grylls. When these spaces reawaken his senses, however, Grylls becomes “a man again,” “how nature made us.” Paradoxically, then, only a socially constructed

wilderness can make Grylls feel natural and fully human; his embodied encounter with “nature” is more important than “real” nature itself.³⁰

Grylls shows how wilderness remains the ultimate site for moral purification, and that the purpose of the wilderness encounter does not necessarily foster an environmental ethic. Grylls’ language shows that the wilderness encounter has become what Jean Baudrillard would call a “simulacrum” of an environmentalist gesture. That is, it substitutes a performance of unity with nature for any actual ecological sensitivity that the wilderness encounter purports to cultivate. Embodiment does not necessarily guarantee environmentalism; the wilderness counter comes to serve the body more than it serves nature.

A Disability Studies Critique

I have argued that the wilderness body ideal is a “hidden attachment” of environmental thought and risk culture. The disablist presence in risk culture modernizes the disablist presence of early environmentalism. This view renders some kinds of activities and environments better than others, depending on how well they enhance corporeal connectedness to “nature.” A disability critique of this position allows—even *advocates*—the centrality of the body as a connection to the physical environment. But it rejects the notion that only certain kinds of physical activities (walking, mountain-climbing), and only certain kinds of bodies, permit this connection. A disability studies analysis rejects the use of disability as an overdetermined metaphor for bodily *disconnection* to the physical environment. Disability studies disrupts risk culture’s distinctions between abled and disabled and challenges notions about what are purifying

³⁰ The show demonstrated further simulacra in a 2007 controversy surrounding its “authenticity”; when it was released that the show staged many of its “wild” encounters and Grylls was often aided behind the scenes (given indoor accommodation, assistance building rafts, for instance), the premise of the show was threatened. The Discovery Channel addressed the controversy by including a statement about these interventions at the beginning of every show.

or corrupting forms of technological mediation, distinctions that arbitrarily dictate how a body can connect “correctly” with nature.

A disability studies analysis of risk culture’s attachment to the wilderness body ideal begins with the notion that disability is a social construction. Disability theorists demonstrate that “disability is as much a symptom of historical and cultural contingencies as it is a physical and psychological reality” (Mitchell and Snyder, xiv). Historically-rooted attitudes toward disability construct it as a negative category, as an overdetermined symbol for an era’s fears. This is not to say that disability is entirely a social construction; on the contrary, to acknowledge the ways that “disability is a form of disadvantage which is imposed on top of one’s impairment” is not to discount the experienced realities of physical impairment. Rather, acknowledging the construction of disability allows us to see the extent to which it is “caused by a contemporary social organization that takes little or no account of people with impairments” (Tremain, 9). Susan Wendell shows how recognizing the construction of disability allows us to look beyond the individual for sources of disablement:

societies that are physically constructed and socially organized with the unacknowledged assumption that everyone is healthy, non-disabled, young but adult, shaped according to cultural ideals, and, often, male create a great deal of disability through sheer neglect of what most people need in order to participate fully in them. (39).

Wendell suggests that neglect constructs disability; disability is not an ontological reality existing prior to society’s views of it, and, as a reflection of those views, its design.³¹

Wendell points out that all bodies are in flux, not just those of the disabled. The rigid binary of disabled-non-disabled is a myth: “we are all disabled eventually. Most of us will live part of our lives with bodies that hurt, that move with difficulty or not at all, that deprive us of

³¹ Disability theorists have analyzed the way built environments create “design apartheid” that constructs disability (Gleeson; Hall and Imrie).

activities we once took for granted or that others take for granted, bodies that make daily life a physical struggle” (263). Shildrick and Price remind the “healthy majority” that “they are merely temporarily able bodies (TABs)” (106). Disability studies makes us aware that bodies are abled and disabled at the same time, depending on time, place, and task at hand (Nussbaum). Ability is relative to phase of life and to society’s structural expectations and physical designs.

Accessibility and design are relative to the ableism that informs their construction. This relativist view of disability rejects the notion that disability is a pathology to be avoided or cured in favor of the view that variation of bodily form is natural or “normal.” The “problem” of disability is thus located in social structures and contexts rather than in the individual.

The same myth of the individual that makes it easy to ignore the structural causes of disability also makes it easy to stigmatize the dependence of disabled people on technology, a dependence that, I argue, is at the root of their exclusion from adventure culture and environmental thought. Adventure culture’s most foundational myth is that the value of the wilderness encounter lies in the fact that the body is going places and doing things that are inaccessible to those who have not disciplined their bodies to be independent. As Cosgrove notes, “It is hardly surprising that [hikers and backpackers on the wilderness trails] should be young, fit, and well-off: the arduous physical exercise necessary is unlikely to appeal to the elderly and infirm” (37). Leo McAvoy adds that “the very elements that make outdoor areas and programs attractive are their undeveloped nature, their ruggedness, the presence of natural forces at work, and the challenge to interact with nature on nature’s terms rather than technological human terms,” make “outdoor recreation and adventure environments” by their very nature “a challenge for people with disabilities” (26).

But inaccessibility is only one aspect of wilderness that creates barriers for people with disabilities. Cosgrove adds that “the highly elaborated codes of conduct and dress for these [wilderness] areas can be as rigid and exclusive in their *moral* message” (37, my emphasis) as in

their accessibility or expense. Such codes “articulate an individualistic, muscular, and active vision of bodily health” (ibid.). That people with disabilities do not like wilderness because their bodies prevent the correct experience of it is an assumption that McAvoy’s research demonstrates fails to recognize risk culture’s “hidden attachments.” Purity, identity, and individualism are associated with independence from technological mediation or the help of others:

Adventure turns on crossing a great divide between culture and wild nature; it is about physical and moral tests that the encounter with *unmediated* nature provides, (hence adventure travel’s emphasis on *self-propelled* transportation is not only a nostalgia for earlier modes of travel, it is also about stripping away the most obvious source of alienation from nature—modern technology). (Braun, 194, my emphasis)

The dualisms in this passage—culture/nature, self-propelled/technology, past/present, movement/stasis—illustrate how the disabled body embodies the opposite of wilderness. The wilderness encounter is only authentic if it involves self-propelled transportation. Movement is vital, and it is as temporal as it is geographical; hence the nostalgia.

But the fact that the disabled body often requires technological “help” to perform adventure activities ignores that *abled* bodies also connect to wilderness in technologically mediated ways. The wilderness ideal body relies on apparatuses of technological support to become “purified” through the wilderness encounter. Braun calls wilderness a “purification machine” to expose its artificiality. Technology is central to outdoor adventure culture. “Machines” are dismissed as impure, but adventure culture relies on, even fetishizes, its “gear.” The success of the adventure equipment industry (REI and Patagonia, for instance) attests to the technological apparatus of risk culture. Such artificial “extensions” facilitate the wilderness encounter as much as ramps, wheelchairs, walking sticks, Braille signs, and cut curbs—the technologies that are associated with disability. But what distinguishes trekking poles, Camelbacks, Global Positioning System (GPS) units, or crampons—technologies that permit

adventurers to encounter wilderness—from the technologies that are associated with the disabled body? The former are fetishized as “gear” while the latter are stigmatized as intrusive or “mediation,” as in Abbey’s comparison of a car to the wheelchair. What goes unacknowledged in all these critiques of technology-as-alienation is that adventure activities also require “sets of humans, objects, technologies and scripts that contingently produce durability and stability,” and “leisure landscapes involving various hybrids that roam the countryside and deploy the kinesthetic sense of movement” (MacNaghten and Urry, 8). The kinds of technologies that would make wilderness accessible to people with disabilities are only qualitatively different from the kinds of technologies that make wilderness available to people without disabilities. All relationships with wilderness are mediated by these objects, technologies, and scripts.

Environmental rhetoric claiming that technology corrupted the “garden” registers disabled figures as unnatural, symbols of the imperfections we must strive to avoid or overcome. A disability critique of risk culture insists that technologies themselves are not to be seen as inherently good or bad, but human constructions: “the social world shapes the meanings of technology” (Gibson, 15). Drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze and Guattari, some disability theorists go further, using phenomenology to argue that all bodies are “becoming.” That is, all bodies are in a dynamic state of being between organic and “other,” organic and machine. No body is enclosed, static, or purely organic. This insight undermines the notion of the independent, “self-reliant” figure the wilderness body ideal champions. It suggests that all bodies, not just ones designated “disabled” by dominant discourse, are “becoming,” dynamic, always in a process of being both abled and disabled relative to context, geography, purpose, or habit. Phenomenology emphasizes that our bodies are not independent objects in the world, but rather embedded in the world *through* objects and habits. The relationship between the body and its environment is constitutive. The body’s various extensions—clothes,

appendages, backpacks, eye glasses, and chairs, for instance—are technologies that make possible the body’s relation to the world.

This argument has important implications for adventure culture. If, as Braun writes, risk culture is about “refusing the disciplinary regimes of modern society and global capitalism, and about pursuing *embodied* rather than *virtual* experiences” (179, emphasis in original), then the distinction between embodied and virtual is important to the wilderness encounter. But disability studies challenges risk culture’s assumption that the human body is natural while all other objects in the world are unnatural. It suggests instead that the body/world, natural/unnatural distinction is constructed and could be constructed differently. In “Disability, Connectivity, and Transgressing the Autonomous Body,” Barbara Gibson argues: “the ‘non-disabled/disabled’ division is actually a false one and [...] all of us inhabit different kinds of bodily differences across a range of experience” (188). Based on her interviews with five people who rely on long-term ventilation machines, Gibson concluded that the relationship between the body and machines ought to be conceived as “becoming.” As Gibson describes one man’s relationship to his wheelchair:

the self is uncontained by the material body and spills over into the wheelchair. The chair is more than a symbolic representation of Jack, it *is* Jack, that is becoming-Jack, just as the body lying in bed is also becoming-Jack, and the future reuniting of Jack and the wheelchair will also be a reconfigured becoming-Jack. (194)

The notion of the body becoming suggests that “selves are distributive,” they are both “confined to individual bodies and simultaneously connected, overlapping with other bodies, nature, and machines” (189). This challenges “prevailing discourses valorizing independence” (187) and posits the relationship between bodies and machines as “connection,” “extension,” and testament to the “fluidity of the subject.” A becoming body is an “assemblage [...] of multiple bodies, machines, animals, places, and energy ad infinitum” (190). Gibson’s use of “becoming” shifts

the valence from dependency to connectivity and accepts as “natural” the human body’s reliance on machines.

Donna Haraway’s theory of the cyborg provides another point of critique. She suggests “we are all chimera, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism” (Haraway, qtd. in Gibson, 192). In her analysis of the men using ventilators, Gibson refers to Haraway’s cyborg figure:

the transfer of energies, the electrified body flowing through power lines connected to the hydroelectric dam, receiving power [...] from the river, from gravity that motivates the river. And energy is exchanged with other bodies that maintain the dam, manufacture the machines, and service the body. The man, the cyborg, refuses to be an individual organism and re-fuses into an individual organism. (191).

This description offers a way of understanding the body’s relationship to its environment as simultaneously geographical and systemic. That is, the body’s movements in physical space connects it to its geography, which in turn connects it to the wider system of the environment itself—in Gibson’s example, the dammed river. Her example, perhaps unwittingly, shows how the body is a medium between a finite materiality and a larger ecosystem.

But I would suggest that the intention behind the use of this example is more than just idealistic holism. Environmental historian Richard White argues that there are *material* connections between the body and the land. In *The Organic Machine*, he offers the concept of “energy systems” as encompassing natural and human entities and forces. Using the historical event of the damming of the Columbia River as a case study, White argues that technology is not the opposite of human, as so much of the above adventure and environmental discourse holds. He writes: “the mechanical was not the antithesis of nature, but its realization in a new form” (34). Suggesting that “we might want to look for the natural in the dams and the unnatural in the salmon” (xi), White challenges the oversimplified view that dams (“the machine”) are

intrinsically bad and pre-dam fishing systems (as they were in the mythical “garden”) are intrinsically good.

Together, Gibson and White suggest that understanding our organic bodies as interconnected with other animals, machines, and people through energy systems is necessary for an “ethic of openness” to the other (Gibson, 195). Rather than facilitating connection to nature, as adventure culture would have it, the myth of the “independent” body works against the possibility of an ethic of openness—to other people, to animals, and to nature. No body is detached, autonomous, or independent from its geographical, historical, economic, political, and social contexts. Organicism, “closeness to nature,” ableism, whiteness—the currently valued poles of Western dualisms—are all relative. Most important, attachment to a myth of a static, independent body prohibits connection, curtailing the possibility of an ethic of openness to other people, animals, and nature. The notion of a body “becoming” rather than “being” offered by disability theorists reinforces attempts by those, such as White and Haraway, who argue that upholding dichotomies between “nature” and “humans,” “organic” and “machine,” actually inhibits an ethic of openness, not just to nature, but to other *people* as well. A disability approach thus casts in stark relief the hypocrisy of the wilderness body ideal’s rejection of technology, since, of course, all persons “employ technologies as extensions of the self” (Gibson, 14). Abled bodies do not experience nature any more “purely” than disabled bodies if we view all technologies as mediating and all bodies as “becoming.” Thus, not only is there no such thing as an unmediated, independent body, there is also no necessary relationship between such a body and connection to one’s surroundings, much less to nature itself.

The fluid relationship between the body and its surrounding has been a focus of disability theorists, as Gibson attests. Disability theorist Michael Dorn reiterates this argument, contending that,

while many of Haraway's readers may have been shocked to realize the extent to which we each operate as cyborgs these days, it could be argued that this assertion would come as no surprise to disabled people, who throughout this century have found themselves wrapped tighter and tighter in to the expanding bio-medical industrial complex. (185).

Dorn is not content with the flight from the body that is often implied by postmodern feminist theorists such as Haraway, since disabled bodies are the "bodies most embedded in these new space/power diagrams" of modernity (188). Although theories of the cyborg and "becoming" challenge the notion of the static, independent body in important ways, Dorn goes further in his theorizing of the disabled body, calling for a theory of "geographical maturity" that reverses the moral valence of the disabled body's relationship to its surroundings.

Rather than viewing the disabled body as a corruption of our corporeality and, by extension, our connection to the material world, the notion of geographical maturity positions disability as allowing an enhanced connection to a material world, not because it is ontologically more material than the abled body, but because the world is designed with abled-bodies in mind. Geographical maturity is cultivated by navigating architectural spaces constructed by ableist assumptions about the average body. That is, a disabled body "exhibits a mature form of environmental sensitivity by remaining attentive and responsive to changing environmental conditions" (183). Geographies are not designed for people with disabilities and so thus require that much more sensory attention to navigate.

Returning to Mairs' critique of mobility that opened this chapter, Dorn highlights the ableism inherent in the postmodern privileging of the "nomad" (first advanced by Deleuze and Guattari) as a traveler through and among identities, and rather suggests the "creative *spatial dissidence* of disability" can be a "form of being-in-the-world that is never complacent with the state of things, but sensitive and responsive to changing environmental conditions and willing to chart new lines of movement that others might follow" (189, his emphasis). Rather than insisting

that a certain kind of body warrants inclusion in the spatial world or even closeness to nature, Dorn's argument suggests that bodies for whom topographies are not designed offer *better* environmental sensitivity—better understood in his terms as “spatial dissidence”—than the “fit” ideal and its corresponding orientations toward nature—expansion, conquest, and individualism. In other words, disability studies does not reject the body as an important site of self- or environmental awareness. It merely challenges investments in the “fit” body.

Conclusion

An examination of risk culture through the lens of disability studies shows how invested adventure culture and environmentalism are in the fit body. Mainstream environmentalism does indeed have a troubling relationship to disability, and should continue to be self-critical about its blanket rejection of technology, often implicit in its use of disability as a metaphor for humanity's alienation from nature, and its historical ties to eugenics, national purity, and class and race exclusions. But despite a troubled historical relationship, environmentalists and disability studies theorists share important values, which risk culture's attachment to the fit body unfortunately obscures. Both advocate an increased awareness of place and of the body in place.

And, like many environmentalists, disability theorists argue that society should be more accommodating to varying “pace of life” abilities. “Pace of life” expectations are in themselves disabling: “expectations of *pace* can make work, recreational, community, and social activities inaccessible” (Wendell, 38). A slower pace of life can create the conditions for a greater awareness of nature. In his discussion of the environmental impact of the introduction of the railroad system in America, for example, William Cronon bemoaned what Karl Marx termed “the annihilation of space by time” (Harvey). In this example, the railroad is not in itself the problem, despite its role as anti-pastoral leitmotif in much U.S. environmental literature. The problem is how speed over distances reduces awareness of localness or place. This *symptom* of the railroad is

what disrupted the human-nature relationship. Edward Abbey can be seen as concerned about the spatial consequences of an increased pace of movement: he wrote that “we could [...] multiply the area of our national parks tenfold or a hundredfold [...] simply by banning the private automobile” (69). To Cronon and Abbey, a slower pace of experiencing nature might lead to a more ethical stance with regard to it, since “a man on foot, on horseback or on a bicycle will see more, feel more, enjoy more in one mile than the motorized tourists can in a hundred miles” (67).

Addressing the relationship between disability and environmentalism will require that we address this symptom without banishing the machine from the garden.

Thus, despite the fact that risk culture sells itself as key to “getting back to nature,” risk is not essential to developing a good environmental ethic or appreciation of transcendence. If contemporary environmentalism excludes those who cannot afford or do not have the desire to participate in dangerous outdoor sports, it is reinforcing environmentalism’s historical exclusions. When risk culture is linked to environmentalism, its attachment to the abled-body makes environmentalism less accessible, restricting the movement’s potential for influence. “After all,” disabled adventurer Bonnie Lewkowitz writes, echoing the environmental justice call for a greater environmental “ethic of openness,” “the more of us there are going out into nature to do these things, the more likely it is that those mountains, rivers, and shorelines will be preserved for all of us for many more years to come” (34). To the extent that the wilderness encounter does foster an environmental ethic, then making wilderness accessible will have the important result of making environmentalism accessible as well.

In the July/August 2008 issue of *Orion*, mere months before the Beijing Olympics, environmental justice activist and writer Rebecca Solnit argues that the Olympics hide nationalism, torture, and abuse behind the mask of corporeal beauty and fitness: “the celebrated athletic bodies exist in some kind of tension with the bodies that are being treated as worthless and disposable” in China, she writes. Solnit then suggests an analogy between this tension and

how the U.S. treats its environments: “Bodies in peak condition performing with everything they’ve got are an image of freedom, as are pristine landscapes like Yosemite and the Tetons. But the reality of freedom only exists when these phenomena aren’t deployed to cover up other bodies that are cringing, starving, bleeding, or dying, other places that are clearcut, strip-mined, and contaminated” (17). From Solnit’s environmental justice perspective, wildernesses and fit bodies both cover up the same thing: a nation’s “sacrifice” bodies and environments. The figure of the disabled body activates the impulse toward corporeal purity and environmental pristine-ness. It is also the body sacrificed in order to uphold these ideals, just as preserved parks allow for the “sacrifice” of reservations, inner cities, and industrial zones.

But, as I have shown in this chapter, there is more than mere metaphor at work in Solnit’s relationship between sacrifice bodies and landscapes. The material, literal connection between bodies and landscapes sacrificed in the name of protecting nature’s nation, for which Solnit holds China accountable, can perhaps best be observed at a place where body, nature, and nation intersect powerfully—the U.S.-Mexico border. More than any other space in the U.S., the borderland bears the corporeal and environmental costs of maintaining the “imagined community” of the nation. The dual sacrifice of landscapes and of immigrants’ bodies in the borderland attests to these costs. In the next chapter, I investigate the sacrifice of bodies and landscapes along the Arizona-Mexico border, paying particular attention to the role environmental discourse plays in obscuring the causes of these costs by blaming the victims as “ecological others.” Environmental alarmism about the damage immigrants do to the borderland prizes the wildernesses there above other border landscapes that have been sacrificed by the legacy of colonial-capitalism and industry, as well as the welfare of immigrants themselves. Bringing the nativist roots of contemporary environmental thought to bear on the current clash between undocumented immigration and environmental protection on the border, in what follows, I demonstrate the pertinence of an environmental justice critique of nature’s nation today.

CHAPTER IV
THE POETICS OF TRASH:
IMMIGRANTS IN THE BORDERLAND WILDERNESS

The geographical imagination of the national story as it has evolved has had material corporeal and geographical consequences, as we have seen in the first two chapters of this dissertation. But the relationship between spatial and corporeal violence that I have been describing in the previous two chapters is perhaps most clearly at stake in a contemporary case study of the U.S.-Mexico border. Discourses of national purity and pollution infuse debates about national security and dictate how to manage the border, as popular media treats the border as hermetically sealing the U.S. from the “tides” of racial others—so-called economic immigrants, environmental refugees, and other “ecologically incorrect third worlders” (Adamson, 169)—threatening to corrupt the nation.

Contemporary border narratives extend the spatial tropes of colonial expansion in the U.S. west. As Razack contends, since the 1990s, a new national story has emerged, which is an extension of previous colonialist versions: “the land, once empty and later populated by hardy settlers, is now besieged and crowded by Third World refugees and migrants.” This fourth chapter examines the most current expression of the national story—the U.S.-Mexico border as a barrier protecting nature’s nation. Following Razack, I argue that the current dominant geographical imagination is “clearly traceable in the story of origins told in anti-immigration rhetoric, operating as metaphor but also enabling material practices such as the increased policing

of the border and of bodies of colour” (75). As Razack suggests, then, anti-immigration rhetoric evinces the spatial stories of the nation, and has material geographical and corporeal impacts.

In this chapter, I examine anti-immigration rhetoric for its spatial tropes of the nation. But I add to Razack’s thesis an analysis of the way the *environment* is invoked to make anti-immigration not just a national security imperative, but an ecological one. That is, immigrants are trespassing protected ecosystems and wildernesses, not just national boundaries. They are thereby not just threats to the nation and to American “blood and soil,” but they threaten a very modern view of the “nation-as-ecosystem” (Wald, 23). In this chapter, I argue that it is because popular discourse about immigration frames the nation-as-ecosystem that immigrants can become ecological others.

This notion of the “ecological other” allows us to recognize how discourses of nature, nation, security, and ecology continue to form a “culture of U.S. imperialism,” as Amy Kaplan succinctly described in “‘Left Alone with America’: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture.” The environmental debate surrounding immigration in Organ Pipe contributes to the ongoing formation of this “culture of U.S. imperialism.” Taking as a premise Kaplan’s argument that “the borderlands link the study of ethnicity and immigration inextricably to the study of international relations and empire” (16-17), understanding immigrants as “ecologically other” highlights the role of environmentalism in this ongoing colonial project.

Introduction

With more immigrants seeking entry into the U.S. than since the first decade of the twentieth century, it is no surprise that undocumented³² immigration has increasingly dominated public debate. Recently, though, concerns about the ecological impacts of immigration on the borderland environment have become part of these debates. In 2004, for instance, the National Parks Conservation Association ranked Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, one of Arizona's treasured borderland natural areas, in "America's top ten endangered parks," due to the "more than 200,000 undocumented border crossings each year [that] cause serious damage to the park's plants, animals, and historic artifacts" (Himot, 32).

Eighty-five percent of Arizona's border with Mexico is protected as parks, refuges, monuments, and natural areas. Nestled among a military range and Tohono O'odham tribal land, these preserved areas operate within a patchwork of vying stakes—tribal, military, security, environmental, private, corporate, and cultural—that entangle the Arizona borderland in what Sharon Stevens has called a "socioecological web," "where every strand reverberates in response to the movement of any other strand, as with passing breezes or insects on spider webs" (2). The Arizona-Mexico borderland is such a web, and how we talk and think about the environmental impact of immigration reverberates there. Media, environmentalists, rangers, politicians, and nativist groups such as the Minutemen have begun to capitalize on the shock-value of migrant damage to the environment for political purposes. The fear of immigrants—or worse, terrorists—coming into the U.S. gets fueled by evidence that their presence is damaging the delicate desert

³² I use the term "undocumented" instead of "illegal" to acknowledge the problem of determining "legality" when the legality of the border itself is contested. Furthermore, calling immigrants "illegal" ignores how their very status as undocumented ensures their vulnerability and the state's role in keeping them that way. Joseph Nevins explains that the term "illegal" "obfuscate[s] the role that various agents and institutions in the US have played in encouraging and/or facilitating unauthorized immigration" (9). Border theorists prefer "undocumented" or "unauthorized" to deemphasize the criminality of immigrants and highlight the role of various structures in "constructing the illegal alien."

environment of the Southwest. Anti-immigration and national security alarmists readily make use of the environment to shape their case against immigrants and rally support.

In this chapter, I examine the rhetoric of environmental alarmism surrounding the Arizona borderland wilderness, focusing on Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument as a case study because it illustrates how the borderland is being contested in this particular historical moment. The rhetoric surrounding Organ Pipe Monument helps frame the immigration debate and has a direct impact on the policies and laws that impinge on this landscape. Mary Pat Brady's definition of landscape helps clarify my use of Organ Pipe Monument as a lens through which to view the role of the environment in the debate. She writes that landscape is

not a simplistic depiction of scenery but rather the conscious construction of a perspective, a way of seeing a region that, in concert with policies, laws, and institutions, *physically makes the land*, produces the landscape materially and sustains it ideologically. (17, my emphasis).

By examining “the conscious construction of a perspective, a way of seeing” Organ Pipe Monument, this chapter demonstrates how environmental language about the Monument “produce[s] the landscape materially and sustain[s] it ideologically.” The landscape of Organ Pipe Monument is not only a product of policies, laws, and institutions, but it is “constructed” by the stories that circulate about it. In particular, the environmental story about Organ Pipe is an example of Gillian Rose's assessment that “landscape is a form of representation and not an empirical object” (195). The story of the landscape of Organ Pipe represents its endangerment by immigrants and smugglers as an ecological issue. In a post-9/11 context “the environment”—as both representation and the land itself—is a key player in national security debates.

This kind of landscape- or place-based analysis is crucial to understanding these debates. Place “grounds” the context in which it is embedded; that is, following Brady, its materiality

expresses the ideologies that sustain it and the perspectives that produce it. Joni Adamson suggests that such a focus on “place” allows the literary critic to “move at times from a large-scale pattern or theory to a specific place” and ask “how differences in ecological, cultural, economic, political, and social conditions get produced and how those differences manifest themselves differently in specific places” (*American Indian Literature*, 83-4). By focusing on a specific place, I follow Adamson’s and other critical geographers’ Foucauldian view of the interrelation of space, language, and power, and analyze Organ Pipe in order to “be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed in the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology” (Soja, qtd. in Villa, 1). The discourse surrounding Organ Pipe Monument exposes these relations of power and discipline. Even more crucially, this discourse shapes how the border landscape is managed and how immigration policy is crafted.

My approach in this chapter thus reflects a methodological shift in the dissertation. Similar to the other chapters, in this chapter I examine cultural and literary texts and use theoretical insights from a range of fields, including environmental justice ecocriticism, environmental history, and geography. But in this chapter I also integrate some field research methods to augment the textual and theoretical insights from these fields. I visited Organ Pipe Monument to “read” the landscape there to understand how the park presents itself to visitors and how the spaces of the park and the border articulate the tensions I described above. I also talked to rangers, the park superintendant, tourists, environmental activists, and humanitarians working on these issues in order to register how stakeholders perceive and portray these problems. I present these field place-based findings alongside textual and theoretical analyses, and attempt to understand the story of this landscape in this historical moment by means of both what is

phenomenologically accessible and what is not—what the landscape is and is *not* telling us. That is, the landscape of Organ Pipe itself communicates who belongs and who does not, and shows how “power is expressed in the monopolization of space and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments” (Germic, 115). These integrated methods allow me to illustrate how attempts to protect the borderland space there as “natural” jar against the realities of the global economy and conflicts over disparate cultural meanings of the land. Thus this chapter’s methods of integrating textual and field analyses reflect the view that these theorists articulate—that discourse and land are mutually constitutively constructed.

In the end, I hope to show that the greening of the case against immigrants puts immigrants and the landscapes through which they migrate at even greater risk than the dominant narrative suggests. Green anti-immigrant discourse makes it easy to harbor racist sentiment because it is backed by “science,” and it warrants stricter security measures, which ultimately do more damage to the ecosystem of the border and to immigrants, even as these measures assure Americans that their border is “secure.” Finally, green anti-immigrant discourse updates environmentalism’s troubling historical investment in anti-immigrant, racist, and colonialist projects, and exposes the conflicting demands America has always made of “its” nature.

Organ Pipe Cactus Monument in the Environmental Imagination

Organ Pipe Monument occupies a central place in the environmental imagination of the U.S. west, which makes the monument’s “endangerment” of special concern to those who write and act in support of the place. The five-hundred square miles of desert Organ Pipe was designated a national monument by Roosevelt in 1937, an International Biosphere Preserve in 1976, and, in 1978, it earned official Wilderness status. Quitobaquito springs, located just on the

border in the Monument, is a magnet for native wildlife and the source of water for Organ Pipe's 227 species of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds (Nabhan, "Land," 85).

Edward Abbey's name for Organ Pipe was the "Big Empty," although due to the springs the park is teeming with animals and plants that do not typically survive desert conditions. Environmental journalist Carol Ann Bassett calls Organ Pipe a "place of edges" for its unique geography and topography. The wilderness area encompasses intersecting ecoregions and climates. The landscape inspired the likes of Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, and Gary Paul Nabhan to recognize its unique environmental features in their writing, and it has been immortalized by naturalists and nature writers over the past century. Organ Pipe has become a symbol of American natural heritage. But it is a place of edges for more than its biological and geographical diversity. Perched on the edge of the United States itself, Organ Pipe has been, until recently, delineated from Mexico by a barbed wire fence marking the international border.

As a result, recent national security and immigration policies are putting the park at risk. How does a national monument, which is mandated to protect nature along a border that is quickly being transformed into a "mini war zone" (Kloor, 11), negotiate competing demands of national security, visitor safety and satisfaction, and environmental protection? Because undocumented activity in remote parts of the border—especially places like Organ Pipe—has been on the rise since the 1990s, and because national security measures have amplified in the post-9/11 climate, Homeland Security gained approval to build a network of fences and barriers along the entire U.S.-Mexico border. By 2005, it began this process, and by 2007, Organ Pipe had built its own vehicle barrier along its border with Mexico. The combination of increased anti-immigration sentiment, the War on Terror, and immigration policies that are moving undocumented activity into increasingly remote parts of the borderland, is creating a "perfect

storm” of conditions working against environmental protection and the human welfare of migrants there.

The environmental costs of immigration are not lost on environmentalists. Beginning around 2000, environmental groups, media, websites, and writers began to convey alarmism about the ecological impact of immigration. The alarmism expresses fear and disgust about the “endangerment” of this treasured landscape, which is bearing the cost of its border location. A visit to Organ Pipe Monument illustrates how this message is conveyed, and how the Park Service translates the border crisis to visitors. Instead of pictures of the rare flora and fauna Abbey and Nabhan have documented, the most dominant sign in the display case at Organ Pipe’s visitor center is an image of trash, surrounded by text describing the national security problem of undocumented activity. The caption of the dominant picture of trash reads:

Organ Pipe Cactus is an attractive place—and not just for scenery. Every year thousands of people are attracted to this remote location to illegally enter the United States. We want you to enjoy your visit to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, but it is important for you to be aware of your surroundings.

As this text states, some of the very features of the landscape that make it attractive to nature-seekers—its remote location and diverse topography—also make the park appealing to border-crossers. Visitors are made aware of the park’s problem with undocumented activity even before they get to the visitor center; they must cross a border patrol checkpoint before they enter the park along Highway 85 from the north. Homeland Security vehicles outnumber civilian vehicles on this road, which is sole access into the park. The park exists in the middle of what Leslie Marmon Silko has called a Border Patrol State (114). Sign-posting at all hiking trails bear stickers declaring “trail closed” and explaining what to do in case of an encounter with an immigrant or smuggler.

In fact, the majority of the park's public access is closed. For reasons of visitor safety, the park no longer offers the natural experience that once drew tourists and naturalists, and inspired environmental writers. Park officials report frustration at having to use limited resources to deal with immigration, smuggling, cleaning up, and visitor safety, not conservation, a fact that is not surprising when you learn that the number of undocumented crossings into Organ Pipe Monument is a hundred times the number of registered visitors ("Stompin," 7). The park has thus become a Border Patrol State, a mini war zone, or a wilderness fortress, to use Mike Davis' language. Yi-Fu Tuan might have called it a "landscape of fear," where the physical space itself communicates to visitors to be on the defensive.

It is significant that the dominant image that conveys this message to visitors is a photograph of trash. Trash is a central discursive trope along the border, constituting what might be termed a "poetics of trash" that shocks visitors, fascinates journalists, and activates public involvement. Just as trash captures Organ Pipe's "problem" at the entrance to the visitor center, it symbolizes the immigration problem in public discourse. I want to argue that it is through the poetics of trash that the environmental argument against immigration gains force. The poetics of trash provoke alarmism about immigration by framing it as dirty, ecologically irresponsible, and morally impure, and it stirs up anti-immigrant sentiment. It dehumanizes, even animalizes, immigrants and ignores the broader, perhaps less viscerally disturbing, sources of the environmental and humanitarian crisis occurring along the border. By cataloguing the waste and human traces of undocumented activity and passing racism as environmentalism, it aids the dangerous project of "divorcing racism from anti-immigrant sentiment" (Pulido, "Race," 156). The poetics of trash construct ecological others in ways that fail to account for immigrants' position in relation to U.S. empire.

The emergence of the environment in this debate functions according to David Mazel's theory that American literary environmentalism, of which the poetics of trash regarding Organ Pipe is a prime example, is a form of "domestic Orientalism." That is, environmentalism's role in the immigration debate should be seen not as a "conceptually 'pure' and unproblematic *resistance* to power," but rather as a "mode for *exercising* power" (144) and delineating between "us" and "them" through the affect of disgust. I want to suggest that the environmental discourse about immigration in Organ Pipe "others" immigrants, and argue that we ought to be aware of the "real territories and lives that the environment displaces and for which it is invoked as a representation." Environmentalism has long been wrapped up in projects of colonial conquest and land enclosures; it is no coincidence that it followed "directly upon the heels of imperial conquest" (Mazel, 144). The case of immigration today provides an example of how its "legacy of conquest" continues to render immigrants the "ecological other" to an imagined community of white, (implicitly environmentally-enlightened) Americans.

One way that the poetics of trash gets articulated is through the ecological metaphor of "natural" versus "invasive" narrating human activity in the borderland. Drawing on metaphors of natural disaster, invasions, and deluge, this language depicts the environment, not the immigrant, as the victim. The desert ecosystem is being "trampled to death" by a "tidal wave" of "illegal aliens" evading the law. One article captures the image: "Tide of Humanity Tramples on Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument" (Coates). Such rhetoric metaphorically likens immigrants to pollution, contamination, natural disaster, flood, tide, plague, or a "swarm" of overly fertile people of color rupturing "fortress" America.³³

In the rhetoric of biological invasion, immigrants are an invasive species endangering native habitat, as in a 2004 *Hispanic* magazine article titled "National Park 'Endangered' By

³³ See Otto Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising*, for more on the pervasiveness of these organic metaphors for Latino immigration, and Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, for background on "fortress" America.

Migrants.” The author’s use of quotation marks around the word “endangered” signals its metaphorical purpose; the word denotes a status we designate plant and animal species, but here it posits migrants as the invasive species and thus the landscape of Organ Pipe “native,” natural, static, and victimized. By invoking ecological language, such rhetoric “demonize[s] invading aliens—at times weaving exotic plants and abject alterities into a common field of moral panic” (Moore, 29). By conflating invasive species and immigrants (the “abject alterities” in this context) the metaphor naturalizes the exclusion of both. Reading immigration in these ecological terms naturalizes fear of invasion on scientific—as opposed to cultural, political, moral or ethical—grounds. It “rel[ies] on the questionable assumption that social systems are indeed in some way homologous to ecological ones,” Ursula Heise observes, and the problem with this logic is that “it lends itself so easily to the ‘naturalization’ of historically, socially, and culturally contingent” contexts (15). Indeed, this ecological metaphor fails to account for why immigrants are in the delicate wilderness in the first place, and deflects blame for environmental damage away from any historical, political, legal, or geopolitical structures.

This discourse of ecological purity is enhanced by discourses of hygienic purity that activate environmentalist disgust. Trash is not only ecologically damaging, it is aesthetically and hygienically troubling. The sheer amount of trash disposed along the migration journey is indeed alarming: adventure writer Tim Cahill estimated the amount is eight pounds per person (91). The ecological impact of so much trash and traffic is visible to visitors everywhere in the borderlands. Trash and traces invite a visceral response of disgust. And the trash is impossible to regulate, making the rhetoric surrounding migrant damage to Organ Pipe’s wilderness appear justified. An article in *The Sierra Times* typifies this response: “the flow of these illegal ‘invaders’ will continue, and the trash will never cease” (Dare). In depicting immigration as a “flow” and

immigrants as simultaneously illegal, invasive, and dirty, this statement renders immigrants ecologically, legally, and hygienically threatening.

Again, Dare deliberately employs the ecological analogy of “invasive species,” indicated by her use of quote marks. This language suggests that immigrants, like a weed or invasive species, are out of control and environmentally irresponsible; in environmental terms, their littering reaches offensive levels. And they are tied to the trash they leave behind, metonymically becoming trash—unworthy and impure. The language of “invasive species” is equated here with impurity and dirt, heightening the sense that undocumented activity is dirty because it is, above all, unnatural. Historian Peter Coates traces the use of this metaphor through the past century in America, revealing that it is a common trope in environmental discourse, what Coates calls “the eco-racism of American nativism.” Passing racial anxiety as fear of pollution or inter-species conflict works so well because it uses the scientific authority of biological metaphor to obscure its racist implications.

In some of this discourse, the land is described as an organic being, which has the dual effect of humanizing the nation and demonizing immigrants. In describing post 9/11 Organ Pipe, the poetics of trash narrate this territorial rupture as biological invasion. Immigrants “scar” the land’s body by rupturing the “seal” of the national body politic: the border. As geographers Juanita Sundberg and Bonnie Kaserman submit, when “environmental consequences of unauthorized border-crossings are narrated [...] through metaphors for the human body” (15), the “natural” body of the nation becomes “unnatural” or diseased. The rhetoric of biological invasion as a threat to “native” land is as much an argument about protecting the purity of the national body politic³⁴ as it is about securing ecological stability.

³⁴ Daylanne English remarks on the national imperative implicit in organic metaphors: “To envision the nation as a body is to fantasize that it can and should work as a synchronous system [...] Even the phrase

In addition to the dehumanizing effects of this ecological rhetoric, tracking waste is a kind of patrol tourism in the borderland that animalizes immigrants and smugglers. Shoe treads, tire tracks, shrines, burlap, beer cans, and fire circles, for example, all indicate how many of what kind of people—hunters, hikers, Border Patrol, migrants, or smugglers—are doing what, where. Tracking trash has become a new form of tourism that combines “community service” and spectatorship. It distances the trackers from the tracked, and placates citizens (many of whom participate in the tracking) into believing that they are doing their part for national security. Worst of all, though, it dehumanizes migrants by animalizing them, making disgust at the desperation of others morally acceptable. This rhetoric emphasizes the organicism of the land at the expense of conveying the embodied humanity of immigrants.

Combining characterizations of immigrants as environmentally and hygienically threatening exemplifies what Jake Kosek has described as a discourse of “purity and pollution” about immigrants in America. Kosek’s theory elaborates Mary Douglas’ analysis of “purity and danger” to explain discourses of environmental racism. “Fears of contagion,” Kosek writes, “were expressed by environmental leaders from Muir to Roosevelt to Pinchot and others,” who “all saw immigration restriction as vital to the protection of nature’s purity” (142). Even Edward Abbey, whose attachment to the borderland wilderness is well-documented, argued against immigration on the grounds that “we still hope for an open, spacious, uncrowded, and beautiful—yes beautiful!—society for another.” Abbey went so far as to say that “the alternative, in the squalor, cruelty and corruption of Latin America, is plain for all to see” (qtd. in Kosek, 142). Abbey’s view explains how environmental and racial anxieties come together in the poetics of trash, which is clearly a tradition of environmental discourse. This anxiety about immigration

‘body politic’ automatically suggests that some body parts will be subject to Spencerian excision or excretion” (188). English thus attests to how the very notion of the nation itself relies on the organic metaphor of the body.

among environmentalists is not new, and discourses of purity and pollution about immigrants “reflect a long-standing conception of a pure nature threatened by various forms of racial difference” (Kosek, 143). These discourses “work to preclude [immigrants] from inclusion in the body politic as rights-claiming individuals” (Sundberg and Kaserman, 5), confirming Mary Pat Brady’s observation that “narratives of place become shorthand references for racial narratives” (16). In the case of Organ Pipe, the narrative of immigrant assault on the beloved Monument conveys anxieties about racial purity, national security, and cultural integrity.

The poetics of trash uses ecological sensitivity to create disgust about migrants in terms of the perceived ecological purity of Organ Pipe. These discourses of environmental purity invite the response of disgust, a response that deserves closer inspection. Abbey’s concern that immigration would assault the “beauty” of the desert exemplifies how disgust serves to draw boundaries between “us” and “them.” In *The Poetics and Politics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White examine the concept of disgust in terms of how the bourgeoisie historically reinforced such boundaries. They define “bourgeois disgust”:

The bourgeois subject continuously defined and re-defined itself through the exclusion of what it marked out as ‘low’—as dirty, repulsive, noisy, contaminating. Yet that very act of exclusion was constitutive of its identity. The low was internalized under the sign of negation and disgust. (191)

Immigrants in the protected border landscape are coded similarly—as “dirty,” “repulsive,” and “contaminating.” Through the poetics of trash, what might be termed “environmentalist disgust” about the ecological impact of immigration reinforces “insider,” dominant identity. It also commits a similar low-high exclusion that is, not coincidentally, reflected in the physical geography of the border, where that which exists “south of the border” is dirty, repulsive, noisy, and contaminating. Arguments that rely on alarmism and disgust to preserve the flora and fauna

north of the border are not innocent, but rather rely on the affective power of disgust to justify containment of immigrants as toxic. Disgust is easily enlisted in the name of beauty and purity to justify exclusionary legal, political, and economic measures.

Another article exemplifies the way environmentalist disgust arbitrarily distinguishes between good and bad kinds of ecological behavior. It warns that Organ Pipe is “being trampled to death” (Watson), a phrase that echoes the language that commonly used to describe what white, American tourists have done to Yosemite, which was seen as “being loved to death.” In this formulation, what migrants do is “trampling” and “endangering,” while what (white) tourists do is “love.” As Sundberg argues, this distinction is less about the ecological impact itself than it is about *who* is exerting the impact. This distinction delegitimizes immigrant ecological behavior, rendering immigrants anti-ecological and therefore not worthy of inclusion in the national body. It also reifies a racially white nation, and equates this white identity with the purity of American nature.

This example also limits a definition of environmentally good behavior to the model of national park recreation, which confines environmentalism to highly regulated outdoor activities in designated wilderness areas during leisure time. Environmental justice scholars are increasingly challenging this model for its class, race, and gender biases. Environments worthy of protection and enjoyment should not be limited to national parks and designated wilderness areas, but rather the environments in which people “live, pray, love, and play.” As Robert Figueroa observes, “mainstream environmentalism [...] is not about protecting where its constituents live but protecting a natural setting and its nonhuman inhabitants” (177). Alarmist discourse about Organ Pipe belies the fact that protected spaces are privileged over the “sacrifice zones” of the environments where human communities of whites, Mexicans, *mestizos*, and Native Americans live in the borderland.

Immigrants are disgusting or “ecologically illegitimate,” to use Laura Pulido’s term, because they are assumed to “not care about protecting their environments” (“Ecological,” 37), but also, I would argue, because their illegitimacy is a function of their nomadism. That is, the invisibility of immigrant movement through the borderland amplifies anxiety about contamination. In this sense, immigrants represent the “thirdworldification,” as Paul Farmer calls it, of the globe, in which the “Third World leaks” into the U.S. (qtd. in Wald, 45). Because migrants *move through* the desert wilderness, immigrants are presumed not to care about protecting it. That is, their desperation to reach safety prohibits environmental savvy as environmentalists understand it: treading lightly, leaving no trace, and limiting traces of human presence in the wilderness. But their ecological insensitivity has more to do with their condition of illegality than their environmental ethic or lack thereof, which the alarmist discourse often fails to acknowledge. That is, the poetics of trash ignores the causes of immigration, the causes of its illegality, the factors that “contributed to the construction of the geographical idea of the Third World,” and the ways in which “the politics of colonialism and decolonization produced contemporary conditions” for immigration (Wald, 47). In addition, because much environmental thought holds that environmental awareness is a function of place-connection—the logic that the only way to care about a place is to be in it for a long time—it views as morally suspect *movement through* place.

Only people who have dwelled in a place for a significant amount of time can understand and therefore take care of that place. In this ethic, migrants are ecologically suspect by virtue of their movement. If “localism [is] a foundation of environmental thought and ethics” (Heise, 4), then immigrants are by definition ecological others because they cannot fit any place-centered conception of ecological legitimacy. Citing Rob Nixon in his editor’s note in the Winter 2007 issue of *ISLE*, Scott Slovic commented on how this environmental disgust even pervades the

work of ecocritics, who “repeatedly run the risk of allowing their ‘ethics of place’ to cross over into ‘hostility toward displaced people’” (v). Fetishizing place-rootedness implicitly renders the *displaced* ecologically illegitimate. Tying environmental stewardship to place-rootedness serves to position people who move—migrants, nomads, and refugees, for example—as ecologically other because they are migratory. The privileging of place often occurs at the expense of people who move, and is particularly damaging to those who move against their will because it ignores the geopolitical conditions of their movement.³⁵

Priscilla Wald’s work on the cultural meanings of contagious diseases provides an excellent parallel to my thesis about the ecological threat of immigrants *as people who move*. In her account of the “outbreak narrative” in U.S. cultural history, Wald argues that fears about contagious diseases dramatize “the danger of human contact in an interconnected world” (4). The fears associated with a “shrinking,” globalizing world activate narratives about the spread of diseases, which become associated with people carrying them. Wald argues that fear of the spread of disease conceive the global economy as an ecology (7), fostering “medicalized nativism” that “stigmatiz[es] immigrant groups [...] by their association with communicable disease,” and which, importantly, associates disease with “dangerous practices and beliefs that

³⁵ In this chapter, I do not provide a detailed explanation of this debate about the environmental consciousness implied in movement versus localism. Tracing this debate seems a critical direction for further interdisciplinary environmental studies of globalization, transnationalism, and postcolonialism. Current geographical theory and environmental history, for example, are correcting localist environmental thought precisely because it can be exclusionary (see Soja, Massey, Sassen, for example). Border theorists also provide an important counter to the environmentalist paradigm, especially in terms of my project. If “displacement and dislocation are at the core of the invention of the Americas” (Alarcon, qtd. in Brady, 9), then any fetishization of the local must be examined for its imperialist underpinnings. Drawing on Paul Gilroy’s analysis of the diasporic “black Atlantic,” Jose David Saldívar further suggests a definition of the border not as a static place, as many environmentalists portray it in their descriptions of Organ Pipe, but rather a dynamic contact zone where resistance, hybridity, and circulation prevail. He asks a question that is *apropos* of the environmentalist investment in “purity” examined above: “What changes [...] when culture is understood in terms of material hybridity, not purity?” (19). Such a question raises the need for a revision of the environmental narrative of the Monument and wilderness spaces in general. A full exposition of this debate is beyond the scope of this paper, but suffice it to say that movement is a crucial feature of environmentalism and begs for further interdisciplinary analysis.

allegedly mark intrinsic cultural difference” (8). The cultural differences that make immigrants epidemiologically “other” similarly make them “ecologically other.” That is, their movement signifies their position of disempowerment with relation to the global economy, and their “trashing” of the land becomes a reflection of cultural difference; in other words, the logic goes, “they just don’t care about nature the way we do.”

And trash makes visible the invisible movement of people through the borderland, marking “the increasing connections of the inhabitants of the global village as both biological and social,” “broadcast together in an ever more elaborate network of human existence” (Wald, 26). Like disease trails, trash makes “the unseen world appear” and “tell[s] the often hidden story of who has been where and when, and of what they did there,” thereby charting “social interactions that are often not otherwise visible” (37). Trash thus “paints the pathways of interdependence” between Mexico and the U.S. with the brush of environmentalist disgust that “can help overturn or reinforce governing authority” (17). Following Wald’s argument, then, we can understand the poetics of trash as a reflection of anxiety about shifting forms of human contact in a new global economic order, in which protecting the ecosystem becomes a matter of “quarantining” the nation (27).

Devon Peña provides an alternative model to the environmentalist fetishization of place. He contends that place moves with migrants in the form of “transnational place-making” or “auto-topography” (2007). In these conceptions, mobility does not necessarily undermine the important ties between community, identity, and place. Retaining the ties between community, identity, and place relies not on staying in one place, but rather on a process of place-making. Understanding “place” not as static but rather as a process, then, Peña neither rejects the importance of place to subject-making nor the power geometry of migration.

These notions reject the idea that because immigrants have left their places of origin, they are necessarily either fragmented in their identities or blank palettes on which to inscribe American place-culture. Bringing places with you is a form of self-determination in the context of global flows of humans. It supports a definition of place that is not about “some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus” (Massey, 154). This “extroverted” or “transnational” notion of place acknowledges place as a process, rather than a myth for which we can feel nostalgic. It allows place-making in spite of displacement and dislocation to ensure cultural survival. It also challenges the premise of the environmental fetishization of place by suggesting that multiple places can contribute to sense of place. Mobility or lack thereof is not in itself an indicator for self-determination or environmental stewardship.

The “Narrative Razing” of Organ Pipe Monument

In *Organ Pipe: Life on the Edge*, journalist Carol Ann Bassett exhibits the panic some environmentalists continue to feel about the way movement implies immigrants have “no ties to the land they roam across.” And Bassett provides an example of how the poetics of trash construct the ecological other in ways that can only “work” by erasing the human history of the border landscape. The poetics of trash not only invokes environmentalist disgust, it also prohibits historical perspective about the presence of immigrants in the landscape:

The constant foot traffic has carved more than a hundred miles of illegal trails throughout the park. Cars, trucks, bicycles, handcarts, and SUVs have left tracks in what was once a quiet wilderness. The constant passage of people and vehicles has affected endangered species such as the pygmy owl [...] Contemporary sleeping circles have been built near ancient ones, and new rock cairns on ancient trails confuse hikers. Mesquite trees have

been cut with machetes for firewood. Campfires have been lit and abandoned. Rare plants such as the night-blooming cereus have been dug up and stolen for their medicinal properties. [...] Bibles, rattlesnake antivenin bottles, plastic water jugs, and food cans litter the ground by the ton along with human feces. (76)

This passage exemplifies how a conscientious, informed, compassionate account of immigration can be complicated by “language and images that tell competing stories” (Wald, 32). This catalogue appears on the surface to be a straight-forward, objective report of Bassett’s observations. But, as David Spurr argues, cataloguing all that is within view is anything but innocent: cataloguing in this way is an example of a rhetorical mode “that comes into play with the establishment and maintenance of colonial authority.” Spurr continues, “there is nothing especially conscious or intentional in their use; they are part of the landscape in which relations of power manifest themselves” (3). In other words, as I elaborate below, Bassett’s rhetorical modes operate for purposes of representation that, perhaps even against her own politics, support the status quo.

Bassett’s litany of wilderness etiquette transgressions—sleeping, moving, and going to the bathroom in undesignated places, subsisting on protected flora, and littering—is neither innocent nor natural, but rather translates disgust as ecological sensitivity. As with the discourse examined above, the lack of historical and geopolitical context for these transgressions obfuscates its racial undertones. By detailing the traces immigrants and smugglers leave behind in terms of their ecological damage, Bassett exemplifies how this environmentalist panic about mobility inflects the poetics of trash and thereby further emboldens environmentalist disgust. If too close a focus on “place,” such as Bassett’s description of Organ Pipe, “is insufficient to understand broader social and ecological processes occurring at scales that cannot be directly experienced and that are therefore outside of phenomenological reach” (Harvey, qtd. in Adamson, *American*

Indian Literature, 71), then Bassett fetishizes the local at the expense of the broader historical and political picture.

In doing so, she fails to imagine the position of the immigrant in the landscape, privileging instead the position of the white, American nature-lover cum tourist. For example, campfires are often lit by “give-ups” signaling their need to be rescued, but Bassett’s language here suggests that migrant campfires endanger the environment for frivolous reasons: they have been “abandoned.” Immigrants’ movement precludes ecological sensitivity and renders them “ecological thugs” (Peña, 200) through the rhetoric of abandonment. This rhetoric suggests that immigrants have agency over their ability to come or go. The rhetoric of abandonment makes it easy to ignore the conditions under which a group leaves its land, and to blame the abandoning group. Narrating departure as “abandonment” cedes entitlement to land based on the logic that the abandoning group failed to care for its land, a logic that played a significant role in Anglo enclosures of tribal lands. The word “abandoned” is charged, and has troubling connotations in colonial history. Careless use of it serves to extend this history by forgetting it.

Bassett’s alarmism about immigrant impact further fails to account for a wider historical picture in her reference to immigrants “stealing” night-blooming cereus. Bassett’s language implies that migrants’ use of the rare night-blooming cereus is reckless, enhancing immigrants’ status as ecological thugs. This insinuation ignores the vexed context of indigenous resource access in Arizona wildernesses. Prohibiting indigenous access to desert plants was central to the colonization of tribal communities in the Sonora Desert. Before Organ Pipe was a monument, O’odham peoples manipulated the primary source of water there, Quitobaquito springs, to increase water flow and divert it for plant and animal productivity (Nabhan, “Destruction,” 291). They planted and harvested plants there for food, medicinal, and ceremonial purposes, and practiced irrigation there (ibid.). It was the establishment of Organ Pipe as a monument that

criminalized harvesting and led to the usurpation of O’odham water rights. The enclosure of the springs as part of the wilderness made traditional activities “illegal.” Demonizing the use of plants in Organ Pipe for medicinal and other survival purposes not only diminishes the physical danger immigrants experience in this landscape, but echoes the logic of the National Park Service in excluding O’odham peoples and their traces from this land for the sake of cordoning off “pristine” nature.

The real ecological thug was the National Park Service, which left an even greater stamp on the landscape than immigrants or smugglers leave today. Upon securing all rights to the land and water in Organ Pipe, the NPS engaged in a “cultural cleansing” of the landscape. It bulldozed sprawling wetlands to create a “Midwestern-style fishing pond,” bulldozed and removed remaining O’odham buildings, including fields, orchards, and archaeological sites, harbored racist sentiment toward the O’odham, and otherwise “brought about the greatest loss of biological and cultural diversity” (Felger, qtd. in Nabhan, “Destruction,” 292) there. In erasing evidence of O’odham presence in the landscape to create a “pristine” wilderness, the NPS imprinted Organ Pipe with a distinctly modern aesthetic of emptiness. It completed in material terms what nineteenth-century explorers, surveyors, and miners had set the stage for in their “narrative razing” of Arizona, as Brady terms it, in which the land was narrated as “full of empty” and available for the taking (Brady, 17-18).

Conservation acted as an excuse for racial containment during the origins of Organ Pipe, and in the past century, conservation and national security efforts have increasingly exacerbated tensions between the park and surrounding stakeholders. As Dan Karalus argues, “ridding the monument of cattle and other intruders aided conservation and preservation goals, but often contended with the efforts of settlers, miners, and natives to maintain cultural and economic traditions in the area.” And the park’s use of “fencing and signs performed similar functions” of

environmental and national security, but they “posed threats to the traditions of some groups while largely helping monument officials offer a pleasing experience to tourists and define Organ Pipe as an environmentally valuable area and later as wilderness” (4). Karalus’ historical analysis of the park’s history of creating fences and borders to manage unwanted human and nonhuman “invaders” shows that the park’s history is characterized by boundary management. The focus on borders and fences to manage who and what can enter the park has been part of the park’s explicit mandate from its inception; what has changed over time is the nature of the perceived outside threat. Threats ranged over time from tribal hunters (who were hunting on their traditional grounds) to cattle to immigrants. Contemporary discourse extends, yet ignores this history by promoting only the value of the park as only to provide a “pleasing experience to tourists” and as an “environmentally valuable area” or “wilderness.” The park continues to be constructed as exclusionary through the continued “narrative razing” of the borderland’s bio-cultural history.

Yet Nabhan argues that this conservation plan was not in the best interest of the environment. Rather, the best environmental plan for Organ Pipe is not one that applies a wilderness or national park model to ecological management, such as “leaving no trace,” but one that conceives of Organ Pipe as a “cultural landscape,” since “ethnobotanically and nutritionally, traditional cultural management practices of the O’odham have kept their oases rich in wild green leafy vegetables, herbal medicinal plants, and edible fruits.” Indeed, “there are strong linkages between human health, biodiversity, protection of endemics, and an indigenous sense of place.” Thus, a better conservation plan would involve the O’odham asserting “their reinstated rights to forage and irrigate, burn and prune, eat and drink from the oasis habitat complex” of Quitabaquito (“Destruction,” 294).

But mainstream environmentalists reject any contemporary expression of the “cultural landscape” model, even as they romanticize the presence of “ancient dwellers” as a part of the

landscape's *historical* appeal. Bassett's romanticization of the "ancient dwellers" of Organ Pipe typifies this contradiction. She acknowledges that ancient dwellers once lived there, but skips over a whole era of human use of the area. The landscape prior to Organ Pipe's establishment as a national monument was anything but pristine, Dan Karalus argues. Not only did "the Hiaced O'Odham occup[y] or travel through the region thousands of years ago, hunting game, carving trails through the desert sands, and harvesting wild plants," but

Spanish explorers and Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries trekked through Organ Pipe's desert scenery into the 1700s. In 1849, hundreds of Mexicans braved the El Camino del Diablo through what is now monument land on their way to California in search of gold. Countless graves, cattle skulls, and sheep skeletons offer testimony to the harshness of the Devil's Highway. [...] Small silver and silica mining operations, as well as cattle ranching marked the period until the creation of Organ Pipe, including the Gray family who occupied a ranch within park boundaries until the 1970s. (5).

Bassett's ellipsis simultaneously invokes nostalgia for ancient, vanished dwellers and erases this more recent history, a history that undermines her pretenses of conservationism.

Her ellipsis ignores these activities, but even worse, it ignores the fact that the park was in fact cleared of Mexican and indigenous populations more recently in order to become a wilderness. The region of Arizona in which Organ Pipe is situated was appropriated through political manipulation, coercion, enclosure, violence, and discursive erasure. By portraying the Sonoran region as available, empty, and resource-rich, and its inhabitants small, vulnerable, and scarce, journalists, mining engineers, soldiers, and surveyors justified and facilitated U.S. conquest (Brady, 21). O'odham peoples were dispossessed of their land and confined to reservations, while Mexicans were coerced and manipulated into leaving their northern territory. The tribe's traditional lands were split in 1853 when the U.S. bought southern Arizona from

Mexico in the Gadsden Purchase, which created the present border (Dougherty, 10), and left two thirds of tribal lands in the U.S. and the rest in Mexico. Adamson affirms the “emptying” of this land to create a “quiet wilderness”: “these lands could only be represented as ‘empty’ or devoid of human culture only after the Desert People [the tribes that make up the Tohono O’odham] had been expelled from the places they had inhabited for centuries” (*American Indian Literature*, 16). The U.S. policy toward the Tohono O’odham was “one of subjugation, segregation, and ‘civilizing the Indians,’” (Weir and Azary, 49), which led to the official designation of a Tohono O’odham reservation in 1937. The 1934 Indian Reorganization Act ensured freedom of movement and territorial rights for tribal members (Nagel, 7).

Thus, in the mid-30s, several shifts in tribal and land policies took place in this region. Because very few of the O’odham members signed the official list of tribal members that could guarantee their claim to access, many “could not live on the reservation” and, importantly, “were not afforded tribal privileges because they were not enrolled” as Tohono O’odham (Nagel, 7). Furthermore, even though U.S. citizenship status is required to move freely across the border in Tohono O’odham land, many Tohono O’odham members were not granted citizenship or failed to sign up for it because that by definition acknowledges U.S. sovereignty. The problem of establishing U.S. citizenship and tribal identity continues to support *de facto* exclusion from these lands. This exclusion has only intensified since 1986, with changes in immigration and drug enforcement laws along the 75 miles of Tohono O’odham border land (Duarte), and 2001, which launched a series of national security measures after 9/11.

And Karalus’ research shows that even as recently as the 1970s, the park and the government, backed by environmentalists, continued to work to exclude Tohono O’odham rights in the park. With the help of Stuart Udall, the park purchased the landholdings and grazing rights of the Tohono O’odham, and in order “to remove Tohono O’odham cattle from the monument,”

Karalus writes, “park officials began negotiations toward a land exchange as early as 1979, proposing to give the Nation the land where they currently maintain grazing rights in exchange for a representative portion of land more valuable and accessible to the park.” Karalus argues that these efforts were pushed through with the support of environmentalists, who were beginning “to focus on external threats to national parks and monuments” (17).

This context of citizenship, dispossession, and exclusion is excluded in environmental alarmism about what is occurring in the border “wildernesses” now. Adamson confirms:

Because their lands have been split by political boundaries, appropriated for resource exploitation, and cordoned off for national wilderness areas and military bombing ranges, modern Tohono O’odham understand that the roots of poverty, injustice, and environmental degradation lie at the heart of Western culture’s favorite story about itself.

(21)

In the twentieth century, Organ Pipe was designated a park in large part due to this “legacy of conquest.”

Lack of appreciation for its legacy adds to the tension between the Tohono O’odham nation, immigration advocates, managers of federal land like Organ Pipe, and Border Patrol. In addition, the Mexican legacy in Arizona further complicates the question of who belongs in this land. Mexicans who had lived in what would become borderland were “‘alienized’ and proletarianized” by “a combination of capitalist market forces combined with a new system of taxation that imposed taxes on land, rather than on the products of land,” resulting in widespread dispossession (Nevins, 108). Green anti-immigrant discourse does not account for this history of dispossession of land along the U.S.-Mexico border, even as it uses an imagined history of that land to fortify American identity.

The lack of historical context for migrants' transgressions in Organ Pipe ignores the colonial history of this landscape and the ecological benefits of human impact there. By ignoring this human history, Bassett creates an ecological moral hierarchy. Her disapproval of immigrant activity unwittingly renders certain kinds of activity in wilderness more "natural" than others, and certain kinds of people "better" for nature than others. In contrast to migrants, what hikers do in Organ Pipe is environmentally correct. Meanwhile, the nostalgic view of ancient dwellers' impact on the land absolves them from environmental sin, despite the fact that, as even Bassett acknowledges, they built sleeping circles and left trails.

This stance is an example of what Shari Huhndorf calls a "fissure" in white identity; nostalgia for "ancient" dwellers pushes prior human inhabitation further back in history than is true, absolves imperialist guilt, and makes it easy for colonizers to ignore their own complicity in dispossession. Drawing on Huhndorf's formulation, I argue that this fissure exposes environmentalism's ideological ties to colonialism. It exposes the contradiction in arguing against immigration on environmental grounds while ignoring the human history of dispossession of land along the U.S.-Mexico border. This contradiction of nostalgia for and erasure of indigenous history might be understood in terms of what anthropologist Renato Rosaldo calls "imperialist nostalgia," in which "people mourn that which they themselves have transformed" (69). Nostalgic stories about the land that erase history implicitly blame prior inhabitants for "abandoning" their own land, render them ecological thugs, and justify imperialist entitlement to the land. Even if they do not explicitly target immigrants, these stories ironically posit the immigrant—as opposed to the naturalist, tourist, ranger, or border official—as the "ecological other" in the border landscape.

Even if we agree that ancient dwellers and hikers are more environmentally sensitive than immigrants and smugglers, these narratives make *them* the cause of a problem for which they are

a symptom. Although it is undoubtedly unintentional, Bassett's and other environmentalist's rhetoric "biologize inequality" (Wald, 47); that is, they serve as "discourses of race and nature [that] provide resources to express truths, forge identities, and justify inequalities" (Moore, 1), and thus too easily lead to exclusionary ideologies and harsh practices.

Nation-as-Ecosystem: The Ecological Argument for Nativism

Alarmism about ecological impact that is irresponsible about its social implications makes the green argument against immigration particularly useful to more extreme nativist groups. These groups appropriate the environmental argument to make a case against immigration in the name of protecting American national identity, which has historically been closely tied to American wilderness. National parks do not simply protect wilderness for its own sake. Rather, national parks are established with the explicit mandate to represent and preserve American heritage. The logic of preserving American identity by preserving land is foundational to the history of wilderness preservation in the United States. National parks have long been associated with nature *and* national identity, what Perry Miller famously dubbed "nature's nation," which assumes that "wilderness has been the basic ingredient of American culture" (Nash, xi).

But this close tie between wilderness and American identity relies on an ideology of racial exclusion. For instance, it helped justify the enclosure of Native land throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to demarcate "wilderness" space. Many national park historiographies frame federal appropriation of tribal land as the inevitable, natural, and superior alternative to tribal control. National parks are, as Stephen Germic calls them, "geographies of exclusion" that "not only define, constitute, and segregate social groups, but function to 'purify' a national(ist) self" (2). As "geographies of exclusion," national parks are "produced" alongside

the forging and purifying of an imagined community of the American nation. Ascribing an abstract national identity onto nature commits what Lawrence Buell calls the “America-as-nature reduction” (15). In this reduction, America’s natural heritage metonymically becomes its identity. That is, if America is the Edenic garden of the New World, as Leo Marx has argued, immigration that threatens nature also threatens the nation.

In the name of protecting “nature’s nation,” the environment has been invoked to justify social control of groups deemed threatening, contaminating, or deviant. A nativist group aptly called Desert Invasion exemplifies how this reduction gets expressed in the current post-9/11 climate. It declares on its internet home page: “our fragile National Monuments, National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks, and National Forests along the U.S. southern border are being annihilated [...] by illegal aliens [and] are quickly being turned into National Sacrifice Areas.” Repeated use of the descriptor “National,” as Sundberg and Kaserman observe, cues an association between American identity and wilderness, and does so specifically in terms of Organ Pipe.³⁶ Further, by using the metaphor of “annihilation” to describe what is happening to the border landscape, Desert Invasion combines fears of biological “invasion” with nuclear annihilation to warn of ecological threats from the outside. This Cold War rhetoric, once marshaled for liberatory purposes by Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring* to expose the environmental and health consequences of DDT “fallout,” is here turned against Carson’s project of resistance from below. That is, if Carson was deploying nuclear war as a metaphor for DDT to alarm and empower the public, Desert Invasion uses it here to consolidate the white, American hegemony.

More rhetorical irony is implicit in Desert Invasion’s use of the notion of a “sacrifice zone.” To environmental justice advocates, the term denotes tribal lands impacted by nuclear testing that turned them into “sacrifice zones,” and where tribal members are “sacrifice people”

³⁶ I am grateful to Juanita Sundberg for this analysis of Desert Invasion’s use of the term “National.”

(Peña, 200). Acoma Pueblo writer Simon Ortiz uses these terms to express the way environmental racism simultaneously “sacrifices” some land and some people in order to protect elite interests. Organ Pipe Monument is a classic example of this theory; wilderness areas such as the Monument are preserved at the cost of other lands, such as the rest of the border environment and Indian reservations. In the environmental justice logic, then, Organ Pipe cannot be considered a sacrifice zone because it by definition a protected wilderness. Rather, the majority of the environment of the border, damaged by militarization and industrialization “invading” from the North, is sacrificed precisely in order to protect places like Organ Pipe. Thus, when nativists employ the term “national sacrifice zone” to refer to a protected wilderness area and “annihilation” to refer to what immigrants are doing to nature, they turn rhetorical tools of the environmental justice movement against the ends of both environmental and social justice.

Desert Invasion is only one example of how the environmental alarmism about the protected border wildernesses is being harnessed for exclusionary purposes. This alarmism ignores the human toll of the border crossings and the environmental problems in *un*protected border areas. Admittedly, such groups are more reactionary than journalists like Bassett, but my argument is that the environmentalist disgust about immigrant activity in the wilderness easily leads to racial anxiety, at best, or worse, to more explicitly xenophobic measures. This slippage is only enabled by the fact that environmentalism often misrepresents or ignores the borderland’s human history, a history that would unsettle tourist entitlement to the border “wilderness” if made more explicit in national park literature and nature writing.

Organ Pipe Monument’s Geopolitical Context

The focus on trash in green discourse about the borderland wildernesses is also dangerous because it establishes the moral inferiority of migrants and the unnaturalness of their presence in

the borderland. What is missing in the discourse about the ecological impact of immigration is this wider view, an awareness that places like Organ Pipe are inherently dynamic and unstable, and are entangled in “socioecological webs.” How did designated wildernesses become “attractive” in the first place? Any place-based analysis of Organ Pipe that seeks to understand the tension between ecology, security, and immigration in the U.S. must begin to contextualize not only the human history of the landscape, but also the broader geopolitical context of the border today.

The current geopolitical context of the border crisis is something of a “perfect storm.” This context does not evoke the same level of affect as the disgust people feel when they see “trash” in an ecologically “pure” environment. Since the 1990s, migrants and smugglers began crossing the border in increasingly remote areas as a result of a Clinton Administration immigration policy, the Southwest Border Enforcement Strategy. This strategy, including Operation Gatekeeper, beefed up infrastructure at urban border crossings, such as San Diego and El Paso, directing the flow of smuggling and immigration into more remote areas. The harsh landscape of the borderland desert was explicitly deployed in a policy of “prevention through deterrence” against immigration. One Border Patrol officer admitted as much in 1996: “eventually, we would like to see all of [the migrants] in the desert” (“Shifting”). The harsh desert makes passage much more difficult. As Adamson contends, “the Border Patrol’s strategy [...] wields the environment itself as a weapon in the battle to stop illegal migration into the US” (“Encounter,” 234). Thus, the physical landscape itself is deployed against immigrants in the name of national security. The Immigration and Naturalization Service deliberately “instrumentalized the natural environment as a tool of border enforcement” (Sundberg, 1).

Environmental alarmism about the border mostly ignores the ecological impact of border security, despite the disproportionate damage it causes relative to undocumented activity. The “militarization” of the border includes remote video surveillance systems, infrared night scopes,

stadium lighting, motion-detecting sensors, and landscape-altering infrastructure such as fencing, roads, and land-infills. Border Patrol uses SUVs, humvees, Black Hawk helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, planes, and boats to secure the border (Sundberg, 11). Border patrol vehicles, floodlights, roads, and fences do far more permanent damage than the trash migrants leave behind. Combined with the explicit use of “natural barriers such as rivers, mountains, and the harsh terrain of the desert” (ibid.), these measures suggest that border enforcement’s damage to the environment is not just incidental to its strategy, but is central to it. In order for the policies to work, the environment *must* be damaged. The green discourse shaping public and policy debates about immigration ignores that both the borderland environment and the ten percent of all migrants who die in it³⁷ are victims of these policies, “collateral damage,” which put far more pressure on the borderland environment than failing to “tread lightly” ever could.

National security is thus in direct conflict with environmental security, a conflict that is exacerbated by the 2005 passage of the Real ID Act. In addition to authorizing funds for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Act includes a provision allowing Homeland Security “the ability to waive laws necessary to complete border fences and roads to improve national security.”

Homeland Security has used the Real ID Act to waive the National Environmental Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, and other laws that have been critical to protecting the environment (Segee and Neeley, 32-33). The mere threat of Homeland Security’s power to use the Real ID Act licenses the state to disregard the environmental impacts of its border security measures. For example, on the eve of Martin Luther King Day of 2007, Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff invoked the Act to waive all environmental laws to permit the building of a 37-mile fence in Arizona. In November

³⁷ These numbers have been on the increase: in 1998, 266 people died, and that number rose to 472 in 2005 (Sundberg, 13).

2007, just the threat of Chertoff's possible use of the Act facilitated state appropriation of wilderness from the Cabeza Prieta Wildlife Refuge in Arizona to build border fencing.

In addition to the ecological impact of border enforcement and infrastructure, and the explicit policy of using the natural landscape as a deterrent, the Real ID Act authorizes environmental destruction in the name of the War on Terror. Thus, the 90s Southwest Initiative, post-9/11 ramped up infrastructure, and the Real ID Act all explicitly sacrifice environmental protection in the name of security. While alarmism about environmental damage along the border defines immigrants and smugglers as the problem, the environmental costs of these federal policies and laws go overlooked. As long as "the environment" is deployed to support national security, the material environment itself will bear the costs of its own misrepresentation.

Adding salt to these wounds is that these immigration and national security measures are just band-aid solutions to the strong push and pull causes of immigration. The 1994 ratification of NAFTA "help[ed] to bring about the social and economic transformations that generate migrants" (Andreas, 608). In other words, these policies helped *cause* the conditions for increased immigration. Further, labor in Mexico and Latin America is underpaid and unprotected. Demand for cheap labor in factories, construction, and services, as well as the traditional demand for seasonal agricultural labor, has resulted from the relatively strong growth of the U.S. economy over the past decade. Working in the United States is economically attractive, and serves as an "escape valve" for Mexico, which is moving out of agriculture, in part because Mexico cannot compete with imports of (often subsidized) U.S. agricultural products. Mexico exports its unemployment problem to the U.S. and remittances back to Mexico are a key source of Mexican income: \$16 billion was sent to Mexico in 2004 and over \$20 billion in 2006 (A. Lowenthal). The U.S. benefits from low wage labor on both sides of the border, in the form of cheap imports and cheap services. "Even if left conveniently unmentioned in the official

policy debate,” Peter Andreas contends, “illegal immigration has become an increasingly important dimension of U.S.-Mexican interdependence” (608). In light of failures to adjust these economic push and pull factors of immigration, it should not be surprising that smuggling infrastructure, corruption, and environmental and human toll rise in response.

Organ Pipe Monument is entangled in this uniquely twenty-first century context of immigration. In the past decade, deploying the desert against immigration ensures that migrants’ bodies stay invisible and outside the economic system, while the system “accumulates” by virtue of their invisibility. Physical nature and the material bodies of migrants are the hidden costs of reconciling the dueling geopolitical need for “open” borders to benefit both the U.S. and Mexico economically with the need for a “closed” border in a post-9/11 national security climate. As Glenn Hurowitz observes,

precisely because of the wall’s ineffectiveness in stanching the flow of people across the border, it’s the perfect solution for many members of Congress who want to show their constituents they’re doing something about illegal immigration—without actually cutting off the supply of cheap labor demanded by Big Ag and the service industry.

This contemporary scenario echoes Silko’s depiction of the way that the materiality of vulnerable bodies supports the dominant order, which I analyzed in Chapter II. Similar to how colonial-capitalism doubly exploited vulnerable groups in *Almanac*, the current system doubly extracts labor from the “shadow” force of undocumented immigrants; first, the façade of national security physically endangers them as they pass into the U.S. through the harsh desert, and secondly, their economic status once in the U.S. enables their further exploitation. Thus, echoing *Almanac*, Don Mitchell contends that the U.S. benefits from keeping this “shadow” labor force “invisible” in order to “extract the labor of dead bodies” (“Axiom”).

The environment and immigrants are externalities of broader geopolitical imperatives. National and economic interests take precedence over environmental and humanitarian interests, producing a situation that Neil Smith calls “uneven development,” in which development occurs for some at the disenfranchisement of others. Doreen Massey similarly describes the “power geometry” of globalization: “different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections” (149). In the end, then, only certain people and certain territories are protected by “national security,” while other groups and landscapes are made all the more *insecure*. As Sundberg concludes, “the proliferation of *insecurities* for bodies and environments resulting from the southwest border strategy entails a re-thinking of security” (2).

Conclusion

We have seen how “nature” is deployed against immigration *rhetorically*, through the poetics of trash, and *materially*, through immigration and national security laws and policies. Meanwhile, border infrastructure damages the environment. Border policy uses the landscape as a geographical barrier, which damages the environment. And in the name of the War on Terror, the Real ID Act lifts laws that protect the environment. Coupled with the economic push-and-pull-factors of immigration, these political strategies are far more damaging to the environment than the traces and trash of immigrants and smugglers.

My contention is that green anti-immigrant discourse has been misdirected, uninformed, and dangerous. It is misdirected because it posits immigrants as the problem while ignoring the political economic context within which immigrants are damaging the environment, as well as the ecological impacts of increased border patrol. The alarmism is uninformed because it ignores the human history of this landscape and fails to question how the land was emptied to make it

wilderness in the first place. And the alarmism is dangerous because it is readily co-opted by more extreme nationalist groups that use environmental security as a guise for more conservative politics. The case of Organ Pipe demonstrates the power of language to dictate human action and alter the natural world, both bodies and landscapes. Discourse about environmental and immigration policy can either fuel these concerns by pitting the environment against migrants, or mobilize them to unite environmental and humanitarian projects.

Green anti-immigrant discourse revives environmentalism's history of being dominated by elites who frame cultural contamination as an ecological issue. They thereby exonerate themselves of any racism in the name objective science. Nature demands its others be contained. Like Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt during the Progressive Era, we want nature to act as a "safety valve" to mitigate social forces of increased immigration and urbanization. But we also want obtrusive apparatuses of national security that threaten—even as they're called in to protect—that same wilderness. Indeed, the story of Organ Pipe extends a long history of the U.S.'s impossible demands on nature—to both *serve as a stage for* and *absorb the costs of* U.S. hegemony.

The recent rhetoric surrounding immigrants in Organ Pipe revives a tradition of social exclusion in the name of "nature." A well-known example of this is the Sierra Club's 1970s-80s anti-immigration policy, which claimed that America should "bring about the stabilization of the population first of the United States and then of the world" (qtd. in Hurowitz). Many environmentalists still hold strict anti-immigration views based on the neo-Malthusian view that the earth's "carrying capacity" can only sustain a stable human population, and that the U.S.'s resources should be preserved for U.S. citizens.

Organ Pipe is caught in a modern version of this neo-Malthusian environment-versus-immigration debate. The debate characterizes the current tension between ecology and security in

this historical moment. Organ Pipe cannot be simultaneously militarized enough to deter or apprehend immigrants and smugglers (much less potential terrorists) and also “wild.” Carol Ann Bassett articulates this paradox: “by increasing law enforcement in the park, there is less protection for the natural and cultural resources, which is why this national monument was created in the first place” (76). Protecting the environment and militarizing the border are fundamentally in opposition. Yet the logical response to news about the ecological impact of immigration is to demand more border security to protect nature.

Green alarmism about increased activity in the U.S.-Mexico borderland is on the rise. Concerns about global climate change are only adding to this fear, as more neo-Malthusian worries about “environmental refugees” joining terrorists and economic immigrants seeking entrance into the U.S. take shape.³⁸ Fear of “invasion” is peaking, and the border landscape and migrants will continue to bear the cost of this fear. In 2007, the Senate approved a 700-mile border wall, Homeland Security invoked the Real ID Act to appropriate land from the nearby Buenos Aires Wildlife Refuge to build a fence, and Organ Pipe completed the construction of its own thirty-mile wall. Given these developments, these desert wildernesses—and the immigrants who brave them—are indeed, perhaps *more* than ever, endangered. What is at stake in this debate is the viability of environmental justice on a warming and globalizing planet, where

³⁸ As I argued in Chapter II, as the “environment” becomes a national security threat in the age of climate change, “environmental security” pundits warn of the imminent mass movement of people living in lowlands around the globe—a twenty-first century “coming anarchy,” to use Robert Kaplan’s term. Not only is “nature” deployed physically and rhetorically against immigrants, as I have been describing in this chapter, it is entering national security debates through climate change discourse. This prevalent and emerging fear of environmental refugees illustrates the pertinence of “the environment” as a *discourse* to public policy debates. Environmental security discourse explains the rise of refugees as a result of climate change, which deflects attention away from the political and economic causes of ecological marginalization, absolving these wider systems of responsibility and blame in favor of the abstract cause of “climate change.” These refugees’ “ecological marginalization” in vulnerable environments, as Thomas Homer-Dixon terms it, exacerbates their status as national security threat and therefore as “ecological others.”

environmental anxieties become *carte blanche* for the exclusion and exploitation of those deemed “other.”

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION:

CAN THE ECOLOGICAL OTHER SPEAK?:

RESISTING AND REVISING MAINSTREAM ENVIRONMENTALISM

“How does nature come to provide a language for the truths of bodies, selves, and landscapes while also becoming a medium for their transformation?” (Moore, Pandian, and Kosek, 16).

The examples of the Indian, invalid, and immigrant in the previous three chapters attest to environmentalism’s investments in social hierarchies, and the ways in which environmental discourse and literature perpetuate these relations. In these three chapters, I scrutinized how discourses of environmentalist disgust and ideals of the “purity” of nature reinforce distinctions between those who are ecologically correct and those who are ecologically “other.” This is important because environmentalism as a movement and as a field of study will not be successful without addressing these exclusions. Given these problems, where to do from here?

Environmentalism’s others are neither silent about their exclusion, nor do they ignore environmental concerns. To conclude this project, I explore examples of how environmentalism’s others articulate their own environmental concerns and identities, and the potential these views carry to be a “medium of transformation.” The question I attempt to answer herein is not “how can environmentalists and ecocritics make room for difference?”, but rather, I want to ask “how do these other perspectives revise mainstream environmentalism entirely, and challenge the very assumptions of what ‘environmental means?’” If identity positionalities determine how different groups encounter environmental concerns, such concerns and identities “may entail entirely different solutions and courses of action” (Pulido, *Environmentalism*, 28)

than the mainstream's solutions and actions. If this is true, then there are many kinds of environmentalisms.

My analysis of *Almanac* in Chapter II provides a starting point for this chapter. Just as *Almanac* provides both a critique of mainstream environmentalism and a different set of “environmental” identities and concerns, the examples I examine below simultaneously point to the problems with the mainstream and open up a variety of alternative possibilities. *Almanac* both criticizes mainstream environmental sensibilities and articulates its own environmental ethic, or what I called in Chapter II an “indigenous land ethic.” As Bridget O’Meara puts it, the novel “explores and critiques interlocking histories of oppression that inscribe the land, labor and bodies of indigenous peoples,” while it “recovers and recreates the submerged (fragmented, partial, transformed) knowledges of oppressed peoples, [...] affirming and strengthening vital social, ecological, and spiritual relationships” (65). In Chapter II, I described how *Almanac* accomplishes this. It outlines an alternative to environmentalism rooted neither in nostalgia nor in stereotypes of the ecological indigene. It rejects purity—of land, of blood, of “nature” broadly conceived—as a basis for environmental and/or cultural preservation. And, in many ways, *Almanac* uses the “master’s tools”—globalization, technology, literacy, military force, and, most important for the purposes of this project, *environmentalism itself*—against the mainstream, “master” movement and its discourses and politics. In other words, *Almanac* does not simply critique the mainstream; it uses this critique to articulate liberatory views of human-nature and human-human relations. It exemplifies how nature can “come to provide a language for” and transform “the truths of bodies, selves,” and landscapes.

In this conclusion, I provide several additional examples precisely to show a multiplicity of ways that this critique can work. I explore key moments in a novel by a Chicana writer, Ana Castillo’s *So Far from God*, and a memoir by a writer with a disability, Eli Clare’s *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*. I chose these examples because these authors’

identities situate them in positions I have already outlined as “other” to mainstream environmentalism, and because they challenge mainstream ideology while providing opportunities for revision. Finally, to demonstrate the relevance of these critiques to contemporary environmental politics and tie these literary examples to the concerns of Chapter IV, I discuss a contemporary activist coalition I studied for my analysis of Organ Pipe Monument, the Coalition to Bring Down the Wall. The Coalition is an example of environmental activism that put social justice at the center of its agenda, at the cost of support from many long-standing mainstream environmentalists who felt that “bringing down the wall”—the proposed fences, walls, and vehicle barriers along the length of the Arizona-Mexico border—was outside the purview of environmentalist concern. None of these examples are necessarily representative of monolithic “alternatives” to the mainstream, but they do begin to articulate the “multiplicity of alterities,” as J.K. Gibson-Graham³⁹ put it, that can destabilize the environmentalist status quo.

The title of this conclusion emphasizes my theoretical approach to these examples. Gayatri Spivak’s famous question, “can the subaltern speak?” hints at the dilemma facing postcolonial writers and activists to articulate their own identity and political claims when the only language they wield is the language of their colonizers, and when their words and acts are so often appropriated by dominant society. Similarly, I want to ask, can environmentalism’s others *articulate*—and even more importantly, *achieve*—their own claims without “performing,” “signifyin’ on” (in Henry Louis Gates’ terms), or mimicking the mainstream models and discourses? Do the strategic advantages of performing mainstream environmentalism outweigh the problems with using the master’s tools, or do they merely reinforce the dominant model? Does the political efficacy of their use justify the means? In other words, can the ecological other speak? The examples described herein accomplish both revising the mainstream and using the

³⁹ J.K. Gibson-Graham is a pseudonym for two authors writing cooperatively, which is why I refer to them in the plural.

master's tools to articulate their own environmental concerns, or, as Laura Pulido calls it, to achieve "ecological legitimacy." They negotiate their own environmental concerns in ways that both challenge and reinforce, even as they tap into the power of, mainstream environmental paradigms. But they do so in ways that create conditions for political empowerment.

To *not* address the environmental concerns and models that environmentalism's others articulate is to reinforce and repeat their exclusion. Therefore, this concluding chapter supports the work that J.K. Gibson-Graham call for in *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)*. Gibson-Graham argue that theorists and activists reinforce the hegemonic forces of "globalization" and "capitalism" by contributing to their discursive power as "master terms." As I have argued throughout this project, "environmentalism" operates similarly as a master term. By failing to understand how, as such, it is resisted, revised, and critiqued, this dissertation would be complicit in the continued silencing of environmentalism's others. That is, if I were to only outline all of the problems with mainstream environmentalism, as I have done in these three chapters, I would contribute to emboldening its all-encompassing, omnipotent, and monolithic nature, to hiding its vulnerabilities and inconsistencies that must be exposed in order to be challenged. Gibson-Graham argue that this process of "overdetermination" of a hegemonic concept grants it more authority than it warrants and makes it impossible to imagine any other alternative.

But, following Gibson-Graham, if we give name to mainstream environmentalism's weaknesses, contradictions, multiplicity, and alternatives, we identify and exploit its "openings." This chapter thus attempts to imagine alternatives by attending to the ways that those excluded from environmentalism articulate those inconsistencies and exploit those openings in environmentalism. These examples suggest that environmentalism is in fact most revolutionary when it is not easily defined, when it can be viewed as "as having, in other words, no essential or coherent identity," in Gibson-Graham's words. Rather, these examples "multipl[y] (infinitely) the possibilities of alterity" (15).

Performing Environmentalism: Ana Castillo's *So Far from God*

Ana Castillo's magical realist novel, *So Far from God*, takes place in the fictional town of Tome, New Mexico. The story's protagonist, Sofi, spends most of her life tending her four daughters and trying to keep her family together. Her husband, Domingo, is addicted to gambling, and comes and goes from the house as his winnings dictate. Sofi is the matriarch of the house. The central narrative focuses on Sofi's four daughters, Esperanza, Caridad, Fe, and La Loca, all of whom die young, even as they remain present in the story. The story opens with the miraculous resurrection of La Loca, the youngest daughter who died as a baby but whose resurrected spirit stays at home with Sofi until the end of the novel, afflicted with epilepsy, a special connection to animals, and a phobia of people. At the novel's end, La Loca dies a second time, this time of AIDS, which she contracted inexplicably. Esperanza majors in Chicano studies and receives an M.A. in communications. She has a short-lived, dangerous career as a journalist covering the Gulf War. She disappears while in the mid-east, presumably taken hostage and killed. Her ghost visits her friends and family in Tome. Beautiful Caridad is brutally and sexually attacked in the first chapter, and goes on to become a clairvoyant and *curandera*, finally falling in love with a woman, with whom she jumps off the Acoma Pueblo to enter a next world. Fe attempts to live the American dream of getting married, working hard, and raising a family. But the American dream proves to be false and lethal. Fe's first fiancé leaves her, causing Fe to scream for years until she earns the title La Gritona. With her speech impaired, the only job she can land is at a weapon factory, Acme International, where exposure to chemicals gives her a terrible cancer that kills her. In the midst of all of this tragedy and the comings and goings of her husband and her daughters (or their spirits), Sofi runs for mayor of Tome and slowly helps recover the struggling town by creating a series of cooperatives and an organization of mothers called M.O.M.A.S.

Several scholars identify the environmental justice implications of this novel. In many ways, the novel advances a distinctly environmental justice, even ecofeminist, model. The

cooperative that emerges at the novel's end and the centrality of the family unit throughout the novel privilege community-based forms of support and political organization (as opposed to the solitary communion between heroic male individual and wilderness). The specific problems facing this particular community are loss of access to and rights of land and resource use, pressure to find employment in dangerous jobs, victimization and exploitation by men (even men who are central figures in the community, such as the priests), the removal of members of the community for wars abroad, and the interrelation of these environmental, economic, military, and patriarchal forces. The community's integrity is therefore threatened from external and internal forces, which are interrelated. This interrelation of concerns is best expressed in the example of Fe, whose job at a weapon-manufacturing factory exposes her to toxic chemicals, which kill her. As a *mestiza* with a speech-impairment, Fe is *triple* structurally disempowered, which creates the conditions that force her to take such a dangerous job. Castillo expresses a critique of this structural injustice by playing on New Mexico's nickname as the "Land of Enchantment": "Unlike their abuelos and vis-abuelos who thought that although life was hard in the 'Land of Enchantment' it had its rewards, the reality was that everyone was now caught in what had become: The Land of Entrapment" (172).

And although "it was the job that killed" Fe (171), "most of the people that surrounded Fe didn't understand what was slowly killing them, too." The incidents of "dead cows in the pasture, or sick sheep, and that one week late in winter when people woke up each morning to find it raining starlings" (172) evince Rachel Carson's argument in *Silent Spring* about how systemic poisoning reveals nature-human interdependence, down to the "raining starlings" that silence spring. Acme International, which "subcontract[s] jobs from larger companies with direct contracts with the Pentagon" (180), is the source of this systemic poisoning, which binds ecosystems, military campaigns, and individual bodies in one "power geometry," to use Massey's language that I described in my introduction. Acme benefits on multiple levels from U.S military

campaigns, much as I argued that the character Trigg did in *Almanac*. That is, Acme extracted Fe's labor and the very means of her labor (her body), as it makes money from war (the killing of people for geopolitical aims), all by not having to pay the cost of the damage it causes.

In addition to being supported by the labor of "dead bodies," Acme's viability is supported also by the sacrifice of ecosystems that help displace Acme's impact onto poor communities. Indeed, Acme instructed Fe to "dump the chemical down the drain," where it "went into the sewage system and worked its way to people's septic tanks, vegetable gardens, kitchen taps, and sun-made tea" (188). Similar to Alexie's treatment of the juxtaposition of local and global scales of environmental justice, Castillo presents Acme's actions as simultaneously supporting war in a distant part of the world on the one hand, and as supported by the sacrifice of humans and ecosystems in the local community of Tome, New Mexico, whose specificity Castillo captures by evoking such personal items as "septic tanks, vegetable gardens," and "sun-made tea." Through Acme International, Castillo reiterates the kind of structural critique of the military-industrial complex that Silko presents in *Almanac*, showing the interrelations of issues of environment, labor, gender, and international conflict, as well as how these connections materialize in a particular local community.

The novel also advances its structural critique through the themes of health and medicine. Representing the dominant medical model, the nurse at Acme International tells Fe that her cancer symptoms are caused by "pre-menopause and the dropping of estrogen levels in women over thirty," and that her symptoms were "just about being a woman and had nothing to do with working with chemicals" (178). Here, the medical model is both sexist and exploitative in terms of labor. The nurse works for Acme, and yet represents objective "medicine." The same capitalist system that benefits from exposing the community to ailments in the first place is also the source of its medical treatment. Indeed, Fe is entrapped in this system, finally coming to see the treatment she receives at the hospital as "torture" (186).

But the novel supplants the dominant medical model with traditional healing paradigms. Castillo details these healing methods through La Loca, whose spirit provides a healing source, but also through Caridad's training as a *curandera*. Her mentor, doña Felicia, tells us that "everything we need for healing is found in our natural surroundings" (62). This view is in direct opposition to the dominant medical model, which defines standardized, Western medicine as the only legitimate source of healing, locates the ailment in the individual patient (as I discussed in Chapter III), rejects structural or holistic approaches to healing as "backward" and unscientific, and is invested in industry, which puts capital growth ahead of health.

Like *Almanac, So Far from God* shows that these interconnections between social justice and environmental degradation are related to colonialism. The text challenges colonialism's appropriation of indigenous and Mexican lands in the Southwest, and directly addresses the U.S. government's disregard of land grants. Sofi explains the ongoing effects of colonialism on her family:

First the gringos took most of our land away when they took over the territory from Mexico—right after Mexico had taken it from Spain and like my vis-abuelo used to say, 'Ni no' habiamo' dado cuenta,' it all happened so fast! Then, little by little, my familia had to give it up 'cause they couldn't afford it no more, losing business on their churros and cattle. (217).

The novel scrutinizes the continued structures of capitalist dominance, and it does so in a distinctly feminist way; that is, by focusing on the environmental and lived experiences of colonialism of the *women* in Sofi's family, it demonstrates that the "personal is political." Sofi's choice to run for mayor is based on her experience as a mother and on the fact that the mothers of her community disproportionately suffer environmental costs and burdens, which I will elaborate below in my discussion of the novel's end. And, also like *Almanac*, the novel shows that colonialism's violence continues in distinctly sexist ways, as La Loca points out: she sees

“healing her sisters from the traumas and injustices they were dealt by society” (27) as her purpose. Thus, continued colonial relations create the conditions in which women and their environments become externalities of economic and military hegemony.

The novel’s central concerns are those of land grants and claims, healing and knowledge, the military-capitalist exploitation of poor communities (specifically their bodies, through the sacrifice of their environments), and the patriarchal dimension of these issues. The novel’s vision of justice is thus a feminist one, but also a specifically Chicana feminist one, as Castillo rejects “white women’s self-help books” (47) as supporting, if not *part of*, the problem. In contrast to the (white) liberal feminist model that seeks the same kinds and spheres of power that men have, the unit of power in the novel is the family, and the sphere of power is “private”—the home. But these distinctions are false in the novel; the home, the community, and “the political” are one and the same, as Sofi’s final role as mayor illustrates. The novel’s critiques and visions of justice, then, are not typically “environmentalist,” which is why it is held up as an example of an environmental justice. It insists on the absolute interrelation between social justice and the environment.

But the novel does not simply critique the dominant model in explicit ways, as I have been outlining thus far. It also does so by using dominant modes against them, a maneuver that serves as an additional form of critique and revision. At the end of the novel, the members of the community, including members of M.O.M.A.S. and the cooperative, participate in the Way of the Cross Procession. The Procession is “not in the least religious in nature but about workers and women strikers and things like that.” Participants “carried photographs of their loved ones who died due to toxic exposure hung around the necks like scapulars” (241). This procession serves the purpose of witnessing and mourning environmental injustice, not supporting the Catholic tradition, which the text treats as an extension of colonialism. The novel’s syncretistic revision of the Catholic ceremony is key to its environmental justice message: “at each station along their

route, the crowd stopped and prayed and people spoke on the so many things that were killing their land and turning those lands into an endangered species” (241-2). By using the Catholic ceremony as an opportunity to vocalize their concerns, Castillo reveals the power of using the “master’s tools” to expose the relationship between labor and environment.

In the middle of this event, which makes environmental injustice a spiritual matter even as it highlights the Catholic Church’s complicity in these injustices, a participant critiques mainstream environmentalism for failing to address environmental injustices:

We hear about what environmentalists care about out there. We live on dry land but we care about saving the whales and the rainforests too. Our people have always known about the interconnectedness of things, the responsibility we have to ‘our mother’ and to seven generations after our own. But we, as a people, are being eliminated from the ecosystem, like the dolphins, like the eagle. We are trying very hard now to save ourselves before it’s too late. Don’t anybody care about that? (242)

In this passage, the marginalized Chicano community asks for inclusion in an “ecosystem” view of society, and frames itself as an endangered species within a global environmental model, as suggested in the language of “interconnectedness” and responsibility to “mother earth.” The community is directly speaking to mainstream environmentalists, for whom the preservation of charismatic megafauna in exotic corners of the planet takes precedence over concerns of social justice or racial inequality. The speaker presents the community as in need of saving, of having been deprived of basic human rights that even the dolphins are granted (in the eyes of mainstream environmentalists). Mainstream environmentalists are thus positioned as having greater relative power, and are even framed in a paternalistic role relative to, the community. The passage exposes the privilege of the mainstream environmental community and the disparity between its “endangered species” model and the Chicano community’s environmental concerns.

This passage because it marks a departure from the much more explicit ways in which the novel criticizes and rejects dominant society as patriarchal, racist, individualistic, and capitalist. This moment signals an “opening” that deserves closer inspection. That is, the novel otherwise works against the animalizing of non-whites and women; even Sofi’s form of livelihood changes from butcher-shop owner to mayor of Tome, demonstrating an ecofeminist vision of empowerment and raised-consciousness about structural violence against animals. And the novel rejects Anglo romanticization of natives or racial “others” as “closer to nature.” In contrast, the above passage *reinforces* Anglo stereotypes about Chicano and indigenous communities being closer to nature, in a nostalgic, mythologized past. It reinforces imperialist nostalgia and the “ecological Indian” identity, despite important distinctions between Mexican and indigenous colonial relations in Southwest, about which Castillo is undoubtedly aware. It would thus seem to undermine the liberatory work that the novel has achieved thus far. Why, after all her work to dismantle white assumptions about the Spanish-Mexican-indigenous communities in the Southwest (Sofi’s heritage is *mestizo*), does Castillo reify such troubling stereotypes?

We could read this moment the way geographer Laura Pulido might. In her article, “Ecological Legitimacy and Cultural Essentialism: Hispano Grazing in the Southwest,” Pulido examines how the community on which the community in *So Far from God* is modeled made similar claims as the character in the novel to gain ecological legitimacy. Pulido observes that the Hispano community of Los Ojos, New Mexico enlisted a similar argument in order to prove to state resource managers and mainstream environmentalists that they are good stewards of land. Los Ojos and the cooperative that emerged out of this tension—Ganados del Valle—can be seen as the “real-world” equivalent of what happens in the novel, as even Castillo seems to credit: “Sofi’s vecinos finally embarked on an ambitious project, which was to start a sheep-grazing wool-weaving enterprise, ‘Los Ganados y Lana Cooperative,’ modeled after the one started by the group up north that had also saved its community from destitution” (146). Ganados del Valle

(and its fictional counterpart, Ganados y Lana) accomplished this by constructing a narrative of having a heritage that was “close to nature.”

In an interview with Pulido, one community activist made such a claim to legitimacy in a way that echoes the character’s claims in Castillo’s novel:

Elk and deer are not endangered in northern New Mexico. But the survival of New Mexico’s Hispanic pastoral culture is endangered. Our proposal to graze the wildlife refuges is an opportunity to strengthen one of the United States’ richest cultures, improve the wildlife habitat, and raise the standard of living in one of the nation’s poorest rural counties. (53)

In this case, officials saw the community a threat to nature because they overgraze. Rather than seeing their environmental behavior within the broad structural conditions of capitalism and colonialism, they saw the community as “ecologically other,” and, in the name of “preservation,” ignored the community’s history of environmental management. Pulido thus theorizes that “ecological legitimacy”—the power to make environmental decisions—“often eludes poor rural populations because officialdom has long assumed that landless and land poor groups do not care about protecting their environments” (37). Pulido interprets this moment as an empowering moment of “cultural essentialism.” This concept draws on Spivak’s “strategic essentialism,” which refers to women’s performance of feminine stereotypes, such as being inherently maternal, to gain *political* power in the public sphere, *qua* women. Similarly, the Hispano community responded to their perceived ecological *illegitimacy* by claiming an essential, inherent closeness to the land—what Pulido terms “cultural essentialism.” This allowed them to gain standing equal to the wildlife that the environmentalists were attempting to preserve.

Within this framework, it could be argued that the community in *So Far from God* deploys essentialism not because it believes in the stereotype, but for strategic purposes. That is, if we applied Pulido’s interpretation of Los Ojos to the same moment in *So Far from God*, we

could see the moment as an example of strategic environmentalism, or, in Soenke Zehle's words, "ecological essentialism":

Performances of ecological essentialism can turn out to be (strategically) useful, when images of sustainability and ecospiritual integrity are appropriated and mobilized by indigenous peoples themselves, precisely because they resonate with supporters in the environmental mainstream and can contribute to the affirmation and protection of native communities along with their own ecological traditions. (335).

In other words, even when an "environmental subaltern" (to use Pulido's term) speaks in the master's language in order to "resonate with supporters in the environmental mainstream," they gain "the affirmation and protection of native communities along with their own ecological traditions"—ecological legitimacy. Rather than seeing this move as a self-degrading compromise, following this line of argument, we might see it as a rhetorical strategy deployed by an ecological other to gain legitimacy in the eyes of dominant environmentalists.

This reading of *So Far from God* is important, but in my view, it does not go far enough. This strategic environmentalist moment in the text is important not just because it earns the community ecological legitimacy. It is important precisely because it shows the problems of the very *terms* of this legitimacy. By playing the role of the ecological Indian—or worse, by equating themselves to a species of charismatic megafauna—the community reinforces assumptions that Chicanos are close to nature in ways that justify their management, not in ways that grant them agency. Gaining equal status to wildlife may achieve some short-term leverage, but it does not challenge the environmental paradigms that create the disparity of power between those who do the protecting and those who are protected in the first place. The result of such a reading as merely strategic means that the Chicano community's "power" is not based on their own authority or land ethic. A "closeness to nature" gained through cultural essentialism is not the same as having agency to make environmental claims. By reading this moment as simply

“strategic,” these issues of ecological authority, paternalism, and racism implicit in equating a community with a species go uncorrected; the community might now be worthy of protection, but the environmental norms on which this logic rests would still stand. This may be ecological legitimacy, but it’s not ecological self-determination.

Rather than being just politically strategic, which it certainly is, I see Castillo’s move as a literary use of irony to expose the faults in the mainstream. Environmentalism makes the conditions within which communities must negotiate ecological legitimacy impossible, which helps explain why many groups do not see their concerns as “environmental” in the first place. Austin and Schill thus argue that the “narrowness of the mainstream movement, which appears to be more interested in endangered animals (nonhuman) species and pristine undeveloped land than at-risk humans [...] makes poor minority people think that their concerns are not ‘environmental’” (qtd. in Pulido, *Environmentalism*, 25). Environmentalism is thereby not only exclusionary in terms of how it draws lines around who is included and who is not. By defining “environmental” issues in ways that hide the environmental nature of many communities’ problems, the mainstream hides the very presence of environmental injustice.

Pulido argues that the use of essentialism was the only way for the real-life Los Ojos community to gain ecological legitimacy, but I would argue that her argument ignores the implicit eco-imperialist underpinnings of these stereotypes, and how they are, seemingly paradoxically, used to marginalize communities in ways that I have been outlining throughout this dissertation. That is, if we read this moment in the novel as strategic environmentalism, we must assume that Castillo intends to leave the dominant environmental model intact. This reading misses the novel’s revisionary potential. The novel goes farther to critique the mainstream model than Pulido’s theory of cultural essentialism allows. Rather, even more than it is a claim to legitimacy, Castillo’s character’s “performance” of support for mainstream environmental values is in fact an ironic *challenge* to and mockery of the mainstream. This

moment is inconsistent with the rest of the novel's messages, and so if we fail to read the novel as a whole, we miss the possibility that the character's claims undermine rather than reinforce the mainstream model. Read as a whole, this moment stands out, suggesting its ironic role.

Castillo's use of this performance of "endangerment" as a critique of the mainstream is further illustrated by her use of scare quotes around "mother earth"; the quotes signal the insincerity and inauthenticity implicit in this culturally essentialist rhetoric. Like the Indian statue in Alexie's story in the introduction of this dissertation, Castillo's explicit use of "mother earth" as someone else's words mocks white environmentalists' appropriation of indigenous values. The quote marks tell readers that the gesture of cultural essentialism is tongue-in-cheek. Further, Castillo's reference to the community's attempts to "save ourselves" exposes the audience's complicity in the environmental injustices that have all along been occurring in "someone else's backyard." It suggests that the community is not ecologically other, unwilling to be good environmental stewards. Rather, it points to the broader structural constraints of colonial-capitalist oppression that impinge on the community's ability to save themselves, to achieve self-determination.

In these senses, then, I would argue that this strange move at the novel's end directly attacks mainstream environmentalists for their complicity in colonial-capitalism, for their use of the ecological Indian stereotype to *limit* the Hispano-*mestiza* community's ecological legitimacy, and for their hypocrisy of wanting to protect "nature" from the very communities they claim were once "close to nature." Thus, this passage exemplifies the power of using the master's tools, but only when read in the context of the whole novel. On its own, as a gesture of cultural essentialism, it reinforces mainstream values that the novel as a whole subverts. Rather than celebrating the strategic move as a sign of the community's ability to speak the right language, as Pulido argues about the community in *Los Ojos*, this passage signals a fissure in mainstream environmentalism to be exploited and exposed, an "opening" that Castillo's character and her

novel reveal. Read as a whole, the novel presents a picture of the community's environmental concerns that may be outside conventional notions of "the environment." If we look only at the "culturally essentialist" moment at the novel's end, we miss the point: while we have been reading, an entirely different environmental positionality has taken shape, one that is not just strategic, but one that revises the very terms of ecological legitimacy.

Beyond the Mountain: Eli Clare's *Exile and Pride*

While Castillo dismantled mainstream environmentalism in terms of its racial and colonial investments, Eli Clare exposes environmentalism's corporeal, ableist, and sexual investments, and even points to the intersection of all of these forms of oppression. In Chapter III, I argued that the disabled figure frequently embodies alienation from nature in modern literature and environmental thought. The texts I critiqued "rely on the potency of disability as a symbolic figure," but "rarely take up disability as a reality" (Mitchell, 16). Environmental writing by people with disabilities, such as Clare, would serve as a fruitful correction to these myths. Accounts of experiences in nature and the wilderness by such writers not only refute the ecoliterary trope I outlined in Chapter III, they provide new views of nature that have implications for crafting an embodied environmental ethic that does not insist on corporeal "fitness."

In his memoir, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*, Eli Clare describes the lived experience of cerebral palsy in ways that challenge the metaphor of disability in environmental thought and literature. Clare takes on the metaphorical "mountain" of societal prejudices against corporeal otherness. His memoir fittingly opens with a chapter titled "The Mountain," which begins with the following passage:

The mountain as metaphor looms large in the lives of marginalized people, people whose

bones get crushed in the grind of capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy. How many of us have struggled up the mountain, measured ourselves against it, failed up there, lived in its shadow? We've hit our heads on glass ceilings, tried to climb the glass ladder, lost fights against assimilation, scrambled toward that phantom called normality. We hear from the summit that the world is grand from up there, that we live down here at the bottom because we are lazy, stupid, weak, and ugly.

This passage expresses Clare's feelings about having cerebral palsy in terms of the challenge of climbing a mountain. The mountain is a fitting metaphor because of the symbolic values that capitalist and adventure culture attach to it: upward mobility, escape, conquest, and vision, which getting to the top entails. And, as I argued in Chapter III, these values activate adventure culture, rendering Clare's critique of the "glass ceiling" and "glass ladder" applicable to wilderness culture as well. Clare thus engages the idea of the mountain as what might be termed a "master landscape," which stands in for more than mere topography.

But Clare's mountain is not just a metaphor. These musings on the symbol of the mountain emerge from his own experience attempting to climb Mt. Adams. Internalizing these symbols linking the mountain with achievement and physical fitness, Clare attempts to climb Mt. Adams. Clare's emotions about the climb are a mixture of thrill and fear. He chooses the mountain himself and sought out the personal challenge; he "looked for a big mountain, for a long, hard hike, for a trail that would take us well above treeline" (3). The beginning of the hike is hard, but invigorating, just like a typical adventure narrative. Clare "takes the trail slowly, bringing both feet together, solid on one stone, before leaning into my next step." But soon Clare begins to get "scared as the trail steepens, and steepens again, the rocks not letting up." He "can't think of how I will ever come down this mountain. Fear sets up a rumble right alongside the love in my bones" (4-5). This sublime response hints at the disablist presence operating in the text. The mountain is real too; Clare wants the view from above treeline and he loves mountains. Yet

achieving this kind of connection is a struggle, a struggle that Clare argues comes less from being deprived of the view and more from the “internalized supercripdom,” “becoming supercrip in my own mind’s eye” (3).

In order to explain this internalization of supercripdom and its disabling effects, Clare discusses the distinction between disability and impairment. He quotes Michael Oliver, who argues that impairment is “lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body” (5). Disability, in contrast, is

the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have physical [and/or cognitive/developmental/mental] impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of society. (6).

The material obstacles of built environments are more obvious in the ways they are disabling. But even on the mountain, the symbolic meaning of getting to the top of the mountain is disabling for Clare. These neat categories distinguishing impairment from disability get confused when society’s ableist values are internalized. That is, Clare’s internalized ableism is disabling in ways that make it hard for him to distinguish his own limits from society’s. Thus, for Clare, the experiences of limitation cause a “frustration [that] knows no neat theoretical divide between disability and impairment” (7). Clare writes that “post-revolution,” when the mountain is stripped of these associations glorifying independence, fitness, and transcendence, he will be able to accept his body’s limitations as “neither heroic nor tragic” (12). The literal mountain will no longer contribute to his “internalizing supercripdom,” reminding him both of his disability and his impairment. Clare’s memoir provides a crucial intervention exposing the association between the fit body and the cultural significations of climbing the mountain.

But Clare retains the possibility that the body’s connection to nature is a means of transformation and empowerment. He provides a much more inclusive model of connection to

nature derived not from an encounter with a master landscape—the mountain— which enables transcendence and visual dominance, but one that locates the value of the experience in the body. Clare replaces the master landscape of the mountain with his body as the vehicle through which nature is engaged. “I will never find home on the mountain,” Clare concludes. “Rather,” he writes, “home starts here in my body” (9). He goes on to define his body: disabled, violated, white, “marked by Douglas fir and Chinook salmon, south wind whipping the ocean into a fury of waves and surf, [...] by the aching knowledge of environmental destruction, the sad truth of that town founded on the genocide of Native peoples.” In these passages, Clare describes what might be considered “impurities” of his body, rejecting the wilderness body ideal’s pretenses of topographical and genetic superiority. In fact, he does quite the opposite. By eschewing nostalgia and acknowledging his own ties to Native genocide, Clare finds an environmental justice ethic through his body’s relationship to the environment. And, by embracing the very aspects of his body that society rejects, Clare is able to recognize structural injustice that marginalizes both bodies and environments.

Clare’s “nature” is not a space of bourgeois identity performance, where nostalgia, “going Native,” and conquering mountains takes place. Clare’s view of nature is not the transparent eyeball top of the mountain, the quintessentially Romantic location of power and perspective. His knowledge of nature starts in his bones—“home.” His substitution of the mountain-climb with engagement with nature at the level of the body suggests a shift away from valuing certain kinds of risk landscapes toward a phenomenological emphasis that renders all landscapes worthy to acknowledge and experience, and all bodies capable of participating in those encounters. Clare’s description of the relationship between his body and the landscape exposes the corporeal exclusivity of these limited views of how to connect to nature I described in Chapter III, and thereby renders a variety of landscapes—not just those that put the body at risk—worthy of corporeal relation.

Precisely because he does not privilege certain kinds of environments over others, and because his cerebral palsy lends him some “geographical maturity,” to refer to Michael Dorn’s term I described in Chapter III, we might even see that “othered” bodies acquire heightened perceptiveness to the relationship between body and environment. They do so not by any inherent “closeness” to materiality, but by virtue of their exclusion from the built and symbolic landscapes in which they must function. For Clare, the woods provided the relationships and perspective Clare required as a child to escape his abusers and find a sense of self:

At 13, my most sustaining relations were not in the human world. I collected stones—red, green, gray, rust, white speckled with black, black streaked with silver—and kept them in my pockets, their hard surfaces warming slowly to my body heat. Spent long days at the river learning what I could from the salmon, frogs, and salamanders. Roamed the beaches at high tide and low, starfish, mussels, barnacles clinging to the rocks. Wandered in the hills thick with moss, fern, liverwort, bramble, tree. Only here did I have a sense of my body. Those stones warm in my pockets, I knew them to be the steadiest, only inviolate parts of myself. I wanted to be a hermit, to live alone with my stones and trees, neither a boy nor a girl. (124)

This simultaneous corporeal and environmental awareness, or geographical maturity, is empowering to Clare because it allows him to disentangle himself from the social structures and people that are disabling. Clare, who in adulthood underwent a sex change to be more biologically male, sought escape in nature from parental pressures to “be more feminine.” And the woods provided a space where he could recover a sense of his body after being raped by his father and his friends, who exploited and reified Clare’s disability and gender vulnerabilities.

If the mode of the pastoral promotes the escape into nature as a retreat from social responsibility, Clare’s retreat is the only place where he can escape these externally-imposed, disabling myths and abuse. Being in nature—wandering, observing, roaming, collecting stones in

his pocket—showed Clare how to view his body not as “merely [a] blank slate upon which the powers-that-be write their lessons” but as “the sensory, mostly non-verbal experience of our hearts and lungs, muscles and tendons” (120). This form of self- and environmental awareness provides a counter to both the risk and eco-psychological narratives that privilege certain kinds of experiences, bodies, and landscapes as the best for “getting back to nature” and the body. In Clare’s revision of the body in nature, he avoids valorizing particular outdoor activities as providing self-knowledge and environmental sensitivity, while still acknowledging the body as central to acquiring these values. He does not need to climb a mountain or put his body at risk to gain these insights. In Clare’s view, nature is a place to escape body scripts, not perform them.

In further counterpoint to the dominant mainstream wilderness model, Clare gains his most valuable environmental ethics not in the wilderness, but in the city. Clare moved to Portland, Oregon, where he acquired a sense of “what was beautiful and extraordinary about the place I grew up in, and what was ugly and heart-breaking” (25). His ability to perceive the simultaneous beauty and ugliness in the mill-town of Port Orford required him leaving that space. He also became politicized about the environment, in part because he saw that urban environmentalists oversimplified the tension between the working-classes, whose livelihoods relied on environmental destruction, and environmental preservation. As a result of his hybrid form of rural-urban environmentalism, and because of his particular relationship to disability and queerness, Clare recognizes structural injustice. As he says, he questions strict preservationism that ignores “a wide-reaching analysis of capitalism, class structure, and environmental destruction” and “doesn’t examine the links among many different kinds of violence and destruction” (62). Suggesting that environmentalists and loggers should direct their frustrations away from each other and to their common oppressor—corporate bullies—Clare comes to understand romantic views of wilderness as counterproductive.

Clare's sensitivity to structural oppression also exhibits the relationship between identity politics and environmental justice about which this dissertation has been concerned:

I never grew into the white urban reverence of tree spirits and Mother Earth, a reverence often stolen from Native spiritual traditions and changed from a demanding, reciprocal relationship with the world into something naïve and shallow that still places human life and form at its center. Nor did I ever grow comfortable with the metaphor of clearcutting as rape, the specificity of both acts too vivid for me to ever compare or conflate them. But I did come to believe that trees and fish are their own beings, important in and of themselves, and that I—as activities, consumer, and human being among the many beings on this planet—have a deeply complex relationship with them. (25)

This description avoids claims to “closeness to nature” based on cultural appropriation, conquest, transcendence, nostalgia for a premodern time, or wholesale rejection of “society,” despite what it has done to him. Although Clare's woods provide escape from society's disabling features, his environmental ethic is one of “openness” and commitment toward the oppressed, of awareness of shared structural oppression. His “wilderness” is a place from which he can craft constructive critique of, rather than uniformly reject, society. Because he sees links among different kinds of violence, his environmental ethic is rooted not in a desire for purity, but in social commitment. Further, by portraying the nature where he escapes social oppression as contested and embedded in human politics, he resists defining wilderness as a space devoid of people, politics, and history. In other words, he sees the space of the woods in terms of its power geometry. By doing so, Clare challenges the construction of wilderness and the ideals of individualism, corporeal fitness, and purification accompanying it.

Being in nature in ways suggested by a disability perspective may thus help to dismantle the very myths and tropes that have informed what counts as the wilderness ideal thus far—Emerson's rugged individual, Thoreau's self-reliant man, Manifest Destiny, Roosevelt's

“strenuous life,” and the Darwinian notion of what kinds of bodies are best suited to be in nature, which creates a sociobiological “geography of exclusion.” Contrary to the notion that the disabled body has no place in the wild, a notion that has its roots in the construction of disability as “unnatural” and adventure activities as reifying the “fit” body, getting away from society can be considered a subversive act against the society’s material and discursive construction of disability.

Conclusion: The Coalition to Bring Down the Wall

These texts by Castillo and Clare make crucial revisions to the mainstream from perspectives informed by class, race, gender, sexuality, colonialism, and ability. These literary revisions have their activist counterpart in a Tucson-based coalition I studied for my research on immigration for Chapter IV. The example of this coalition, the Coalition to Bring Down the Wall, serves as a fitting conclusion to this dissertation in part because it united environmentalist, humanitarian, and indigenous activists in recognition that environmental and social justice concerns are structurally related. For a brief but crucial moment in 2003, the Coalition successfully blocked border policies that structurally infringed on all three groups’ interests. But this example is also a fitting conclusion because it highlights the mutually constitutive relationship between imagination and politics, a relationship that pairing the above literary texts with this “real-life” activist example emphasizes. Like the texts above, the Coalition outlines the kind of revision work that the mainstream movement will need to do in order to achieve its purported end of protecting the environment.

In Arizona during the early 2000s,⁴⁰ environmentalists were divided over whether immigration policy was within the purview of ecological issues, and many environmentalists are

⁴⁰ My information about the Coalition is based on field research in Arizona. I conducted participant observation at a teach-in for the Coalition in January 2006, and conducted a series of interviews between

anti-immigration, drawing on a long legacy informed by fears about population growth in the U.S. Mainstream environmentalists diverged from an emerging group of environmentalists, who recognized that the ecological crisis of the border was a function of colonial-capitalist relations, laws, and geopolitics. As the leading environmentalist of the Coalition put it:

The debate is shaped around the damage to the environment on the border. Immigrants drive cars, defecate, pollute the water, start fires, leave trash. These are definitely problems. But it's so easy to point at the immigrants as the problem. Obviously immigration policy is at its roots. It's a very economic, a very international problem, and has to do with international economic policy; the roots are very deep and very complex.

Neeley reflects how the issue of “trashing” the environment divided environmentalists into two camps—those who “pointed at immigrants as the problem,” and those who saw the structural, complex causes of immigration as the problem. This activist example thus avoids the pitfalls that *Almanac* critiques, and which I argued in Chapter IV pit nature and immigrants against each other. In each of these cases, “blaming the victims” is rejected because it fails to challenge dominant society’s role in creating the problem for which they blame the victims. And Neeley’s description acknowledges the power geometry of the space of the borderland, where “international economic policy” is literally a feature of the landscape.

Not surprisingly, then, indigenous and humanitarian groups working in Tucson and in the borderland were and continue to be suspicious of environmental groups, a suspicion that exists for precisely the reasons I outlined in this dissertation. Environmental groups have historically sought the others’ support in saving species and habitat, but rarely ever return the favor of synthesizing agendas, much less scrutinizing the extent to which their agendas conflicted with

humanitarian and/or indigenous interests. Neeley critiques the elitism implicit in this typical environmentalist gesture of coalition-building, and why it fails:

But there's this elitism that comes in, because on the other hand, the environmental community is always saying "we need to outreach to the Latino community." We fail to let the Latino community to bring their issues to us, to tell us what their issues are. Our idea of coalition building is a big one-way sign. We're never going to get outreach until we let them know we are about their issues. So when we're doing this outreach, we put jaguars into the conversation about humans dying, but we don't return the favor; we don't carry their water. And then we never sat down and figured out why they don't care about the environment. Hiring a Spanish-speaking environment outreach person isn't enough.

Environmental groups often assume that social justice works like trickle-down economics:

humanitarian and indigenous groups will benefit from environmental protection since, after all, there can be no people without an environment. In their view, coalition-building has meant getting social justice groups to recognize the value of the environment, not challenging their own ideas of environmental concerns. Environmental groups therefore rarely considered ways in which indigenous and Latino environmental concerns might be different from, or even in conflict with, mainstream concerns.

Given the tenuous historical relationship between environmental groups and groups interested in immigrant welfare or indigenous claims, it is astonishing that the Coalition happened at all. It is the exception that proves the rule—that most environmentalists believe that immigration policy is not their concern. Environmentalists were divided about the environmentalist group's participation in the Coalition. In general, they would rather let Homeland Security override environmental laws in order to tear apart the border wilderness with walls and intrusive forms of surveillance than advocate for better immigration policy, which would stem the causes of increased immigration through these delicate borderland deserts. The

structural relationship between immigrant welfare, issues of indigenous sovereignty along the border, and environmental destruction is not clear to them. Neeley describes the dominant environmentalist position:

It's hard to get the environmental community as a whole to call for immigration reform.

It's very controversial to step outside of the environmental box about issues that are only seen as indirectly related to the environment. There's hesitancy to say "we need immigration reform." They're more likely to say "put up more barriers." But what I spend a lot of time talking about with this group is that we can't pick just some wilderness. These walls just funnel immigrants to other environments.

Those "other environments" include the Tohono O'odham nation, as well. Implicit in any argument to protect the borderland wildernesses is the argument to displace the ecological crisis of immigration onto the tribe and their land.

Recognizing that the ecological problems of immigration require not defensive measures on the local and limited scale of the border, but immigration reform at a national scale, the Coalition mobilized political opposition to one of the federal government's attempts to legislate the building of a wall to line three-quarters of the Arizona-Mexico border. The Coalition's efforts were successful, and although the government continues to push with much success for border walls, the Coalition's brief triumph created a precedent of collaboration for future campaigns. One way they did so was by framing the "problem" in ways that went against the dominant discourse and policy. The problems for all of these groups were the Southwest Initiative and 1990s Clinton Administration policies, which the Bush administration maintained, as Neeley noted:

Masses of increase in environmental degradation and deaths, racial profiling along the border, the desecration of sacred materials, impeding tribal crossing—all these are problems caused by these policies.

The Coalition rejected the dominant environmentalist and nativist immigrant-versus-nature narratives, as well as the notion that environmental and national security can only be achieved at the expense of human security and further tribal concessions. As Neeley argued, the members of the Coalition “figured out quickly that we were all allies, that we are all suffering under the militarization of the border.”

And mainstream environmentalists are hesitant to address their own complicity in creating the ecological crisis of the border, as Neeley observed:

We all benefit from having this shadow underclass of people, who risk their lives and pay lots of money to cross a very dangerous border to work. We need to honestly say to ourselves “if I don’t like immigration, then I should pay more money per pound of oranges, for example, to make sure the job getting it to me is paid enough, that they have rights to unionize.”

It is not surprising that the mainstream environmental movement and public appropriation of the environmental argument against immigration insist on building more walls as the correct response; it is a lot easier to blame immigrants, ignore legal and political economic forces of immigration, and protect one’s access to cheap goods and services than it is to tackle immigration reform.

Given all of these conditions, how did the Coalition succeed at coming together at all? According to Neeley, it was really by luck that these otherwise disparate and often antagonistic groups got together for this end. They had previously collaborated in support of a political candidate because of his labor, environmental, and indigenous politics. When Homeland Security threatened to build a wall across three-quarters of Arizona larger than the Berlin Wall, this prior collaboration created the conditions for collaboration around the more divisive issue of national security. Thus, the Coalition was not only the exception that proved the rule that there are deep schisms between these groups, it was also an example of how suspicions and divisions between

interests could be overcome through awareness of shared structural disempowerment, especially on the part of the environmental groups that joined the Coalition.

What these examples all have in common is that they suggest that uniting mainstream and environmental justice concerns will be difficult, especially because there is no “one” environmental model that is best, and especially given environmentalism’s “hidden attachments” to racial and colonial dominance. The identity negotiations at stake in building these coalitions and uniting agendas have as much to do with power as they have to do with protecting ecosystems, a fact that mainstream environmentalists would prefer to overlook as unrelated to the strictly scientific questions of how to preserve nature. These literary and activist examples suggest that the voices of environmentalism’s ecological others, not just the voices of the mainstream, who often claim to “speak for nature,” already articulate what “counts” as environmental concerns and solutions in ways that may not seem “environmental” to the mainstream. They model the process of opening up possibilities for alternatives that Gibson-Graham call for, and point to the potential these alternatives carry to transform the ways we pursue social justice and environmental health.

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