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A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PERSPECTIVE ON THE AMERICAN FRONTIER:
THE INFLUENCE AND CONTINUITY OF LITERARY AND HISTORICAL RHETORIC
ON CURRENT ATTITUDES TOWARD WESTERN LANDSCAPE
AND URBAN WILD SPACES

by Shelley McEuen

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Committee Approval

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For Emma, Kjel, and Marye

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Dissertation Abstract--Idaho State University (2020)

This dissertation offers both a comparative rhetorical analysis of texts and a consideration of the practical influence of those texts for how Americans conceive contemporary landscapes, in particular hybrid landscapes. It begins with consideration of westward expansion texts (including narratives of invitation, diaries, letters, and homesteading accounts specifically focusing on the historical and literary period occurring between 1803 to the 1930s). It then connects those texts with early American literature about the Western landscape, including works by Nathaniel Hawthorne, George Perkins Marsh, and John Muir, written between 1820 and 1911. Finally, it examines contemporary writing in both literary and higher-journalism genres about the West. This dissertation documents the role that texts have played in defining wilderness, seeking not only to inform readers about the potent role of the writing we consume—including classic “nature writing”—in shaping attitudes with not always-tonic, real-world consequences for the environment, but also to encourage reconsideration of the value of hybrid spaces.

Key words: American Literature, ecocriticism, rhetorical analysis, urban wild spaces, western frontier, nature writing, American Histo

A Twenty-first Century Perspective on the American Frontier: The Influence and Continuity of Literary and Historical Rhetoric on Current Attitudes toward Western Landscape and Urban Wild Spaces

Introduction-Background and Definitions

As a resident of Twin Falls, Idaho and new to running, I was surprised and pleased to discover a natural gem within blocks of my house. This was back in 2003, and nearby Rock Creek Canyon became part of my regular running route. The urban canyon is startlingly beautiful, and its proximity to downtown Twin Falls belies the natural wonder in its depths: mule deer, raccoon, Northern Flickers, jays, Western Tanager, and yellow-bellied marmot. To be inside Rock Creek Canyon is to hear birds, not traffic—it is to feel distinctly elsewhere. Three unmarked entrances and just one kitschy wagon-wheel sign announce Rock Creek's walking trail and connected park below the plateau on which the city proper sits. Eighty-foot-deep basalt canyon walls frame the view of the four-mile-long paved trail system, running mostly along the creek under a canopy of Russian olive, elm, ash, and cottonwood trees.

My curiosity about Rock Creek deepened as I began noticing features of the area that were not so bucolic: the offensive smells in particular locations along the trail and the garbage often present in this natural setting. I also began noticing a common local attitude surrounding the canyon—one of marginalization and dismissal. When I spoke in public about Rock Creek, I routinely heard responses such as “It stinks down there,” “What a dump,” or “I just don't feel safe there” and “Isn't that where the homeless hang out?”

This discrepancy between my love for the canyon and the less positive attitude held by some of my neighbors led me to an inquiry into Rock Creek's history (I am, after all, both a graduate student and a citizen interested in questions of western wilderness and human

agency). To my surprise, what I discovered about Rock Creek's origins, its waters, and its neglect proved much more complicated than I could have imagined.

My initial research led in many directions, beyond tracing Rock Creek's history to rhetorically analyzing local newspapers and opinion/editorial pieces from the early 1800s, along with early homesteading narratives from the area. As a citizen who loved Rock Creek, I desired a deeper understanding of Rock Creek's marginalized condition and the seemingly lack of public consideration of the canyon as natural; as a graduate student in English, I conceived as the initial research progressed that a wider view—a rhetorical study both broad and historical—would provide that insight. What I ultimately found was nothing less than an invitation to consider much broader questions regarding the concept of nature in the American West. The core theme that emerged was a perceived disconnect in public imagination between protected, destination wilderness areas and the landscapes considered more hybrid, inhabited and worked through agriculture and industry, an idea William Cronon speaks about in his essay “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.”

In consequence, this dissertation's methodology ultimately involved conducting a rhetorical analysis of various texts, including those that invited emigration west, the actual trail and homesteader narratives resulting from this emigration, and a wide variety of literary, popular, and commercial narratives reaching from the 1820s through the present era. The exploration of texts—literary and nonliterary, historical and contemporary—reveal rhetorical patterns with very specific ideologies which speak to the ways in which these spaces are currently defined and regarded, culturally. For example, some natural areas in the American West are valorized, such as Silver Creek near Picabo, Idaho. Others such as Rock Creek Canyon

in Twin Falls are dismissed as less worthy of conservation and respect, even though the latter is only an hour's drive away from Silver Creek and every bit as beautiful.

Such rhetorical exploration revealed a range of qualities found in the literature that can be plotted on a scale. One end of the rhetorical spectrum sees texts that display romantic ideology. They focus strongly on their author's personal emotional identification or "ego-merging" with landscape, often including an aspect of personal transformation or healing occurring in the natural world. The opposing end of this rhetorical scale relies heavily on journalism and reportage, with authors acting as historical witnesses and describing the consequences of human conquest.

This dissertation explores how these two contrasting strains of rhetoric in American writing about the natural world—along with the texts falling somewhere between the two or encompassing both—have predisposed Americans both historically and currently to ways of defining, thinking about, and ultimately using the natural world that often result in a dismissal of hybridized (urban interface) spaces while those spaces considered pristine or more natural are celebrated.

In its essence, one might say in consequence, this dissertation is about the creation of myths—or controlling stories—about the natural world. As Mark Fiege writes in *Irrigated Eden*: "Every American landscape embodies a myth; to discover the physical place is to discover the great story that its inhabitants told about it," (21). To analyze the "stor[ies]" that Americans have told about their own western frontier and to trace the effects of such concepts on today's attitudes toward urban wild spaces, the dissertation which follows draws on a variety of extant theoretical, critical, and scholarly perspectives as well as on a rich range of canonical and lesser-known primary texts that embody evolving perspectives on the American west.

Since this is a dissertation grounded in literary (and non-literary) texts about landscape, it is naturally influenced by ecocriticism. In her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, Cheryll Glotfelty defines and defends the importance of ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the environment” offering an “earth-centered” approach as a companion equal to feminist and Marxist criticism (xviii). Indeed, when ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) was founded in 1992, its mission included “the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature that considers the relationship between human beings and the nature world” and to promote “new nature writing, traditional and innovative scholarly approaches to environmental literature, and interdisciplinary environmental research” (Glotfelty xviii). An ecocritical, focused examination of the increasingly complicated relationship between westerners and their landscape is integral to the work of this dissertation, and it draws upon the writing of environmental historians such as Roderick Frazier Nash and Walter Nugent and ecocritics Conevery Bolton Valenčius and Evan Berry, among others. These writers provide a bridge to the rhetoric of the establishing narratives (those of invitation and homesteading) to narratives of public policy, early American literature, environmental debate, and contemporary nature writing.

Since Glotfelty's iconic definition, the genre of ecocriticism has continued to evolve. One contemporary strain of ecocriticism proving especially important in the work of this dissertation involves the pairing of ecocriticism and narrative theory, and my dissertation draws on the work of Scott Slovic and Erin James, two scholars whose belief in personal storytelling figure prominently in their research. While James' work draws on the importance of "storyworlds" as places where nature writing, author position, and reader meaning intersect, Slovic insists that it is the ecocritic's role to physically engage with the spaces they are writing about as well as write

about their experiences with these spaces—an act Slovic believes "produces the most engaging and trenchant scholarly discourse" (34-35).

Echoing Slovic is the work of ecocritic John Tallmadge, who also makes a case for a more engaged ecocriticism practice by calling for “a natural history of reading” (282). Tallmadge argues vehemently for the use of field work—personal engagement with the natural landscape—combined with natural history “as a model for [a] disciplined integration ... that is, experience of the referential world—into interpretation and criticism” (284). As a method of study, Tallmadge states, the natural historian brings extensive learning, an array of skills, and actual physical engagement to the process. Applying this natural history to the study of landscape and environment requires a disciplined acquisition of knowledge and an application of this knowledge through actual experience, what Tallmadge refers to as “erudition and engagement” (287). Two scholars having worked within this realm of what Tallmadge calls “real world” scholarship are Brad Tyler and Jeff Crane—two writers whose work appears prominently in this dissertation—whose publications *Opportunity, Montana: Big Copper, Bad Water, and the Burial of an American Landscape* and *Finding the River: The Environmental History of the Elwha*, respectively, serve as examples of direct and personal field experience combining literature and the land.

As suggested by the personal narrative which begins this introduction, natural spaces that are part of an individual's direct, daily encounter often exist within cities and towns. These "working" or hybrid landscapes—a broad term parsed in Chapter Five—remain of particular interest in the study which follows. Western urban wild spaces, including Rock Creek, serve as examples of places where the pristine and hybrid boundaries established in some literary and non-literary texts are necessarily complicated. As Fiege states: “In the hybrid landscape, clear

distinctions between technology and natural systems dissolved. Nowhere was this more evident than in hydraulic technology, in the dams, reservoirs, canals, and ditches that provided the basis for irrigated agriculture” (205). Rock Creek provides tangible, historical evidence of an urban waterway serving a dual purpose—originally as sewage transport and currently to irrigate. Additionally, Rock Creek (and other urban wild areas like it) are often overlooked or marginalized because of their contemporary and historical purposes—spaces that do not easily fit the definition of wild. This perceived gulf between the pristine natural versus urban wild spaces, according to environmental historian Richard White, creates an imposed dichotomy, where the wild lies “beyond the reach of our labor” (182).

This dissertation thus works on several levels, offering both 1) a comparative rhetorical analysis of texts and 2) a consideration of the practical influence of those texts for how Americans conceive contemporary landscapes, in particular hybrid landscapes. It begins with consideration of westward expansion texts (including narratives of invitation, diaries, letters, and homesteading accounts specifically focusing on the historical and literary period occurring between 1803 to the 1930s). It then connects those texts with early American literature about the Western landscape, including works by Nathaniel Hawthorne, George Perkins Marsh, and John Muir, written between 1820 and 1911. Finally, it examines contemporary writing in both literary and higher-journalism genres about the West.

Chapter One focuses on the narratives of invitation that brought people westward with promises of prosperity and reassurances of assistance aligned with performing God's labor. Chapter Two examines early homesteading narratives, considering how a specific purpose and lens establishes particular relationships between humans and their landscape. Chapter Three analyzes texts written during the period following the initial homesteader movement, which

contribute an environmental ideology grounded in two persistent and opposing strains in American writing about the natural world—the anthropocentric perspective (with humans as the "crown of creation") and the romantic perspective of wild nature as sublime. Chapters Four and Five make contemporary nature writing the focus with the former analyzing the residual romantic elements found in texts relying on an ego-merging, emotional engagement with the natural world in which one can retreat for personal transformation, healing, and unity. The latter, Chapter Five, addresses the contemporary realist perspective through the introduction of the aforementioned rhetorical spectrum, arguing that there are various degrees of ego-merging or nature as central character presenting in contemporary nature writing. Wendell Berry is presented as offering a comprehensive, all-encompassing antidote to this polarized spectrum with his biocentric view conflating the pristine and hybrid.

Yale historian and environmentalist Jenny Price in her two-part essay "Thirteen Ways of Seeing Nature in L.A." says "To define nature as the wild things apart from cities is one of the great, fantastic American stories. And it's one of the great fantastic American denials" (207). As this dissertation documents the role that texts have played in that "denial," it seeks not only to inform readers about the potent role of the writing we consume—including classic "nature writing"—in shaping attitudes with not always-tonic, real-world consequences for the environment, but also to encourage reconsideration of the value of hybrid spaces like little Rock Creek Canyon, wonderful in their own particular way.

Chapter 1: The Invitation: Narratives inspiring a Myth and Movement

Primary Texts and Attitudes Toward the American West [1803-1930]

The Louisiana Purchase in 1801 and the subsequent expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark (with its romantic allure) are historic, monolithic markers for the initial expansion into western territory. This study begins with the texts which were immediately inspired by these events in early American history, a set of narratives promising prosperity through their invitations west. These emerged following the Louisiana Purchase and continued to be published, sounding the same themes, through the nineteenth into the early twentieth century. Among them are advertisements, newspaper opinion/editorials, and emigrant “how-to” guides that served as enticements for potential homesteaders. Embedded within these narratives is an array of rhetorical patterns including metaphors and idealistic language connecting national pride, identity, health, and an enduring definition of wilderness to the experience of western migration, settling, and homesteading. Despite their historical distance, this dissertation will argue that the wilderness sensibility evident in these early invitation narratives continues to shape western ideology toward nature today, including a deeply embedded sense of self in relation to landowner's position in the natural world, a framework toward which westerners continue to wrestle.

Although the North American continent was already populated by Native Americans, much of the historical and literary writing of the period between 1803-1920 depicts the landscape as uninhabited, a void open for opportunity. This depiction is problematic not only for its inherent erasure of Native Americans but also for its contribution to the ways emigrants viewed the landscape with regard to ownership and use. When President Thomas Jefferson commissioned Meriwether Lewis to lead an expedition from the Missouri River to the northern

Pacific Coast and back, the expanse of the Louisiana Purchase was understood to be a blank slate "not only on the map but in human thought" (DeVoto ix). Jefferson understood the importance of establishing a trade route across the continent, and the newly acquired Louisiana territory represented that possibility. Accompanied by co-captain William Clark, the Shoshone guide Sacajawea, and thirty-two men, the two captains mapped rivers, traced the principal waterways to the sea, and solidified the American claim to the territories of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. During this harrowing journey they kept a detailed journal, offering a first-hand account of the living organisms and diverse landscapes encountered from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean. The journey itself, its depiction by others, and the captain's journals provide a logical entrance for exploring specific aspects of the period's rhetoric which worked to establish a set of cultural expectations and values associated with the western frontier.

Although the journals would not see official publication until 1904, several ambitious accounts of the expedition were presented to the public before Lewis and Clark had even returned. These accounts fueled early interest in westward expansion and helped establish a fundamental ideology toward land acquisition, cultivation, and fate later referred to as "manifest destiny" by John O'Sullivan in 1845. Letters from Lewis and Clark delivered by traders during the expedition were distributed widely by newspapers of the period. According to Doug Erickson, archivist and head of special collections at Lewis and Clark College, these letters were "expanded and given considerable conspicuous prominence in published form." In 1806, a Philadelphia publisher and economist Matthew Carey included a paragraph about Lewis and Clark in his thirteen-page addendum to the American edition of John Newbery's venerable *Compendious History of the World*. According to Erickson, Carey's brief expedition account "glorified the promise of the expedition and gave early hints of American entitlement to

the far western territory of North America." Although brief, Carey's language speaks to an early appropriation toward the expanding landscape and its resources:

The extensive region of Louisiana has excited a laudable attention in the President of the United States, as a field of investigation worthy of the politician and philosopher. To explore this wilderness, and to obtain some better knowledge than we yet possess, of its various productions and inhabitants, Major Lewis and his company are now travelling at the public expense. They have extended their researches many hundred miles up the great river Missouri, and are still pursuing their journey to the west and northwest. This enterprise cannot fail to produce some very important discoveries, useful in the highest degree to the interest of commerce; nor can it occasion any just offence to the governments of Great Britain or Spain, if conducted with that prudence which we have a right to expect from the temperate councils of Mr. Jefferson.

(237)

Carey's words established the prominence of the expedition for the general public.

Copperplate engravings accompanying Patrick Gass's journal, the first official account of the expedition to be published in 1807, represent a visual compendium of sights and encounters from the journey. Among the illustrations are depictions of the two captains working in tandem with their party to construct a fort, "holding a council with the Indians," and shooting and becoming treed by bears (*Discovering Lewis and Clark*).

The 1815 Nicholas Biddle edition of the journals was a narrative account of the expedition based on Lewis and Clark's account and true to the original. Biddle's paraphrase offered the public the first official written depictions of the historical North American

exploration which has largely become the American Epic. It is difficult to underestimate the consequential enthusiasm of early Americans toward Lewis and Clark's successful and ambitious early exploration. Roderick Frazier Nash states, "The importance [of the Lewis and Clark journey] lay on the level of imagination: it was drama, it was the enactment of a myth that embodied the future. It gave tangible substance to what had been merely an idea and established the image of a highway across the continent so firmly in the minds of Americans that repeated failure could not shake it" (18).

Promoting the population along this "highway" of newly explored territory became the work of the emboldening rhetoric of the period. Such rhetoric of invitation to settle this new area came packaged with promises of prosperity connected to regional agricultural opportunities made possible through legislative initiatives such as the Homestead Act of 1862 and the Carey Act of 1864. Language used in books, newspaper advertisements, opinion/editorial pieces, posters, and brochures across the nation offered enthusiastic assurances of the success that would follow readers' westward investment.

Arguably, one of the most influential exemplifications of assurance during this period was a widely used catch phrase, "rain follows the plow," guiding homesteaders to an ill-informed security toward farming in arid conditions. In a study published in 2000, Historians Gary D. Libecap and Zeynep Kocabiyik Hansen argue it was the precipitation-follows-cultivation theory coupled with a homesteader lack of "analytical framework nor sufficient data for predicting fluctuations in rainfall" which contributed to a "climate information problem" and subsequent homestead failure (3). "Rain follows the plow" is credited to land speculator Charles Dana Wilber, paraphrased from his book *The Great Valleys and Prairies of Nebraska and the Northwest* published in 1881. In his text, Wilber establishes what earlier climatologists of the

period had speculated—that a larger population inhabiting arid or semi-arid areas would, through the use of general agricultural practices, permanently alter the climate of these regions by manifesting more humidity. Notable in Wilber's language are biblical references and the metaphor linking plow to prognosticator: "Yet, in this miracle of progress, the plow was the avant courier—the unerring prophet—the procuring cause" (70). The next statement in the passage however, moves away from the miraculous toward results obtained solely from physically working the land: "Not by any magic or enchantment, nor by incantations or offerings, but, instead, in the sweat of his face, toiling with his hands, man can persuade the heavens to yield their treasures of dew and rain upon the land he has chosen for a dwelling place" (70). Wilber's final high-tension sentence in the passage stitches together a succinct recipe for success, connecting the act of labor to worship: "It is indeed a grand consent, or, rather, concert of forces—the human energy or toil, the vital seed and the polished rain-drop that never fails to fall in answer to the imploring power or prayer of labor" (70).

Wilber's essential argument for an existing "concert of forces" is meticulous, citing his amateur scientific observation of the landscape from the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas in 1879: "During all the previous years ... only sparse grass, in tufts or patches, has partially covered the ground, but now the new carpet of green, growing crops, for the first time wholly overspreads and shields the earth from the sun's heat" (142). In confident, declarative language, Wilber proclaims the current climactic conditions giving rise to a fortuitous agricultural state:

The crop surface, from sprouting to ripening—a period of four to six months—is a condensing surface, and will cause an increase of rainfall all along the line of farms from north to south, increasing in amount until the average measure of precipitation is reached. Every year will show the work of a large

army of pioneer Farmers, who, armed with the plow, will overturn and conquer a wide belt of the wild prairie desert, thus preparing the way for a still further advance of rainfall. (142)

Excited land and railroad developers were quick to follow Wilber's lead. *The Wenatchee Daily World* in September 1909 promised “Rain when you want to make it, and no rain in harvest time” (Wenatchee, Washington). *Goodwin's Weekly* in Salt Lake City on September 19, 1908, ran a half-page advertisement touting Carey Act Lands in Oasis, Utah, promising “water in the canals” and “crops next year,” in bold, large type (Salt Lake City, Utah).

If promises of a fortuitous agricultural climate weren't convincing enough for emigrant homesteaders, the rhetoric of prosperity included surety through the miracle of irrigation. In an expansive and timely study of the impact of irrigation on overall agricultural production in the western United States from 1910 to present day, Eric C. Edward and Steven M. Smith contend it was irrigation, even in its earliest forms, that helped shape agricultural production significantly through the turn of the twentieth century. Increased access to ground and surface water through methods existing prior to widespread pumping and central pivots—technology used extensively post-1940—increased crop production, thereby resulting in more valuable farmland (Edward and Smith 1104). Stephanie Sarver argues it was the powerful rhetoric associated with irrigation fueling William Ellsworth Smyth's 1900 text *The Conquest of Arid America*, which worked to “transform [...] popular notions about the feasibility of farming in arid America” (213). With particular focus on the arid regions of the west, including Nebraska to the Great Basin, Smyth's text describes the drier landscape as possessing “new and superior conditions” uniquely situated for successful settlement through irrigation methods (20). Sarver argues that Smyth's portrayal of

the landscape depicts an "opportunity for men to unite to know their environment, and by extension, God's ways" (222).

Newspaper editorials assured homesteaders that no arid landscape lay outside the realm of agricultural abundance when water could be harnessed and redirected. *The Wenatchee Daily World* from June 26, 1909 claimed "they [irrigation projects] have been perfected to a degree that makes them among the best of investments." *The Kennewick Courier* on December 20, 1912, ran a full-page ad for Pacific Power and Light proclaiming "Irrigation is King: More and more will this be true as the thousands of acres adjacent to Kennewick are reclaimed by the use of electricity for irrigation pumping" (Kennewick, Wa). The words "Practical. Safe. Convenient. Cheap" are listed in bold lettering above a photograph of a healthy, thriving crop field.

Newspapers of the period were also invested in crafting a particular homesteader persona which proved attractive—a rugged, adventurous individualist. An opinion piece running concurrently in Montana's *Glasgow Courier* and Idaho's *Blackfoot Optimist* in June, 1915 relied heavily on the metaphor of homesteader as soldier, only more "independent" as the frontiersman "lacks comradeship" associated with a cavalry. The homesteader, argues the author, is "worthy of double honor [for] heroic deeds" associated with the longevity of his work: "The men therefore who go out into the wilderness and who know at the same time that they must fight a battle that will cover years, are heroes of the highest type." *The Gazette Times* from Heppner, Oregon, on July 23, 1914, echoed the independent character of the successful homesteader. Under a photograph of two men—the first sitting atop a split-rail fence in front of a small cabin surrounded by trees, the second sitting astride a fallen timber in front of the fence—the caption capitalizes on the ways in which "many a man has taken advantage of Uncle Sam's homestead policy and staked out a homestead in the foot hills or mountains." Taking "grit and courage to do

this ... many a man is independent now because of his effort." Noting that land covered with timber can be more costly to clear, the caption highlights the rewards of such labor: "When he has 20 acres cleared and a few cows he commences to be independent, especially if he is near a creamery. For cream and butterfat are cash" (7).

With all its promises of lucrative labor, western life was also depicted (in tune with the initial Lewis and Clark expedition) as wild, dangerous, and romantic. One notable, full-page photograph appearing in the December 18, 1904 edition of the *New-York Tribune* shows an image of two men engaged in warfare with an enormous grizzly bear. One man is pinned to the ground with the bear biting into his left forearm, his right arm raised with a dagger. The second man looms over this scene with a hatchet raised above his head prior to a promising blow to the bear. The caption reads "An Illustration of the Perils of Our Western Wilderness" (17). Fifteen years following this featured photo, the ideas of a perilous, romantic frontier still prevailed, now advertised as entertainment. The *Ogden Standard Examiner* from December 5, 1920 announces the opening theatrical production of *The U.P. Trail*—"A throbbing play of the frontier land where danger walked hand in hand with romance" (Ogden, UT). Images accompanying the advertisement depict artistic renderings of a man shouldering a rifle, dog at his feet, ahead of a covered wagon. Flanking the image are the captions: "Where every man was a sheriff" and "Where bags of gold were jackpot" (Ogden, UT). Above this is a second image featuring a couple in an embrace, the woman with a pained expression, the man donning a large cowboy hat.

In addition to the influence of newspapers and advertisements on the American perception of the west, the idea of a rising, expanding American empire also imbued public school texts. These texts helped secure a foundational definition of the western frontier. After analyzing over 1,000 nineteenth century schoolbooks, Laurence Hauptman argues for their

significance in helping forge a rhetoric of western expansion and national identity: "The symbolic importance of the frontier and its psychological and mythological overtones were perhaps the most enduring impact of schoolbooks on American students' minds in the hundred years before the Turner thesis" (271). This impact, argues Henry Nash Smith, "dominated American development" forging the way for Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis which "could hardly have attained such universal acceptance if it had not found an echo in ideas and attitudes already current" (Virgin Land 4). Hauptman contends these school texts reflect and normalize the pervading enthusiasm of the period for continental expansion, generally depicting the frontier as a "Xanadu" or "semi-magical place" rife with opportunity (271). Textual support from Hauptman ranges from elementary readers and spellers to college history texts, citing pictures of covered wagons, poems and essays, all with strong predilections toward a frontier ideal of opportunity and new beginnings.

With language carefully crafted to reflect a preordained destiny, history texts register the United States fulfilling a prophecy. Benson J. Lossing's 1864 text *A Common School History of the United States*, reflects this ideology in unadorned prose: "God did not design this continent to remain a wilderness" (9). Following this publication, Lossing published the 1866 *A Pictorial History of the United States* where he claims the position of historical perspective in a declarative, low tension statement: "The great garden of the western world needed tillers, and white men came" (12). This idea is concretely represented in *12 Progressive Exercises in English Composition* by R.G. Parker, Principal of the Franklin Grammar School: "He has ploughed, sowed, and reaped his often scanty harvest with his own hands, assisted by three sons, who, even in boyhood, were happy to work with their father in the fields" (24).

Successful tilling of the land was coupled with a view of nature as divine gift in these early readers. Included in a series of lessons from *The American Educational Readers* is this directive: “Let us thank God for the sun, with its warm rays and cheerful light. How great are all His gifts to us! Let us praise Him with our whole heart!” (89). A later lesson within the same text makes the connection between God and natural abundance even more explicit: “Let us be thankful to Him who causes the seasons to change, and makes all things to rejoice. He opens His hand and supplies the wants of every living thing” (102). Many readers combined text with visuals to make the connection between the divine and the natural world. Accompanying a line drawing of South Dome in Yosemite in the Fifth Reader of *The American Educational Readers* from 1873 is the caption: “The study of nature is important because it reveals the glory of God” (qtd in Elson 19).

As they cemented ideas of manifest destiny, textbooks also worked to shape national character, according to J. Merton England in *The Democratic Faith in American Schoolbooks, 1783-1860*, working from a sense of duty “to help form and preserve it” (191). England claims these early textbooks “set out to create a usable past for republican America- an agreed-upon national myth, we might say now” (191). When studied collectively, says England, “schoolbooks present a composite picture of a chosen people and a unique nation, especially favored by Providence and endowed with a world mission to spread democratic government and pure religion” (191). Reinforcing the argument for these texts pushing a national morality, Ruth Miller Elson claims “the cultivator of the soil is, at the same time, a cultivator of virtue” (27).

While schoolbooks connected integrity with tilling sacred soil in children’s minds, emigrant “how-to” guides provided guidance and direction to adults adding to the pervading, nationalistic language of the period. Many such guidebooks started as travel diaries which were

then marketed for profit via publishers or newspapers, while less reliable guides were also eagerly published to meet market interest and were not as well researched, according to John D. Unruh in *The Plains Across* (3). Early emigrant travelers assumed an audience interested in their accounts, and many wrote with the intention of marketing their texts. Regardless of original intent, the guides often reflect an eagerness toward promotion and settlement of the landscape of one particular area over others—often an entire state. Historian Ray A. Billington calls these guides "Books that Won the West."

The 1873 guide *All About California and The Inducements to Settle There* claims that the state "offer[s] to the agriculturist a profitable, but also a pleasant, and attractive home, in which will render them contented, healthy, intelligent, and patriotic" (22). Published in 1914, *The Homeseeker's Guide to the State of Washington* in a separate section titled "A Few Important Facts Showing Washington's Superiority," proclaims "The State of Washington is an empire within itself, and can produce anything necessary for human happiness" (Giles).

Pervading language found in many emigrant guides relies on a determined vision of future success. Robert Edmund Strahorn's "The Hand-Book of Wyoming and Guide to the Black Hills and Big Horn Regions for Citizen, Emigrant, and Tourist" (1877) presented a particularly detailed future. Strahorn's text depicts sketches showing "The Wyoming of the Future" with three images: a smelter, a wheat field being cut by a horse-drawn sheath, and a lumber mill (23). Accompanying the sketch is Strahorn's prophetic inspiration for Wyoming's untapped abundance:

Wyoming excels any of them [states] in pastoral resources and equals any for the value of mineral deposits or forest lands ... The time draws near when the emerald plains and the metal-ribbed mountains of Wyoming will enable her to take exalted

place among her sister States, holding deeply hidden in her rocky defiles a nation's wealth and bearing in her sheltered valleys the keys which unlock those wondrous treasures (26).

These texts of promotion and invitation became prolific and more sophisticated as railroads made use of small-town presses and hired their own reporters to visit western areas they were trying to populate. Richard White, in a chapter titled "The Transformation of Western Society" claims that due to reporters being treated well by the railroads, they "were hardly likely to be very critical of the lands their hosts wanted them to promote" (196). The result, says White, were stories about western lands that were "little more than advertisements for the railroads" (196).

One early land speculator offering some of the most robust, fervent language enticing potential homesteaders west was William Gilpin. Gilpin's language conflated emigrant success with aspects of nationalistic purpose and pride, and his far-reaching vision of the North American continent presents a critical voice within this period of western expansion. In a range of texts, including "The Central Gold Region, The Grain, Pastoral and Gold Regions of North America with Some New Views of Its Physical Geography and Observations on the Pacific Railroad" and "Mission of the North American People, Geographical, Social, and Political," Gilpin contributes a vast, optimistic vision to potential emigrants and investors. After serving as a military officer during the Mexican-American War, Gilpin accompanied John C. Frémont on an expedition west and was instrumental in helping form the Oregon Territory. A dropout of West Point, Gilpin served as the inaugural governor of the 1st territory of Colorado from 1861-1862, although scandalous financial dealings cut his governorship short, accounting perhaps for aspects of his bombastic persona. Politically and ideologically, Gilpin adhered to ideas of

Manifest Destiny and to the belief that each successive empire was superior to the last. This “hereditary line of progress” would culminate in the Republican Empire of North America (*The Central Gold Region, The Grain, Pastoral and Gold Regions of North America with Some New Views of Its Physical Geography and Observations on the Pacific Railroad* 132-133). However, the destiny of the American landscape could only be shaped by the heroic response of emigrants, an audience Gilpin addresses in rhapsodic, inspirational prose:

The untransacted destiny of the American people is to subdue the continent—to rush over this vast field to the Pacific Ocean—to animate the many hundred millions of its people, and to cheer them upward ...to agitate these herculean masses—to establish a new order in human affairs ...—to regenerate superannuated nations—to stir up the sleep of a hundred centuries—to teach old nations a new civilization—to confirm the destiny of the human race—to carry the career of mankind to its culminating point—to cause a stagnant people to be reborn—to perfect science—to emblazon history with the conquest of peace—to shed a new and resplendent glory upon mankind—to unite the world in one social family— ... and to shed blessings round the world.” (*Mission of the North American People, Geographical, Social and Political* 130)

Gilpin fashioned himself God's messenger to potential homesteaders, evident in his text's title as well as specific diction used throughout this particular passage. Gilpin's low-tension sentences rely on repetition; the word “destiny” used once in association with subduing the continent, once in regard to confirming the human race. Gilpin then continues with more beatific language “to shed a new and resplendent glory upon mankind,” “exalt charity,” and “shed blessings round the

world,” to link ideals of sacred duty to the work of emigrants. The passage is also a repetitive set of verb commands, establishing an inviting call to action.

Another crucial aspect of Gilpin’s bardic, determined vision of North American destiny was a belief in a divinely inspired landscape. Within Gilpin’s vision, nature becomes a willing accomplice in the future emigrant’s endeavors, itself a physical confirmation of potential fortune. North America, Gilpin believed, appears uniquely positioned for fortitude: “Northern America opens towards heaven in an expanded bowl to receive and fuse harmoniously whatever enters within its rim” (*The Central Gold Region, The Grain, Pastoral and Gold Regions of North America with Some New Views of Its Physical Geography and Observations on the Pacific Railroad* 20). A fertile landscape awaiting a willing population created an inviting proclivity for emigrants to believe they were God’s chosen.

Prior to Gilpin, a more stylistically tempered westward invitation came from Hall J. Kelley who, reading about the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1815, became inspired to venture west of the Rocky Mountains. A graduate of Harvard, Kelley appears to have been undeterred by two thwarted expeditions to Oregon Territory before finally embarking in 1833. Although he succeeded in reaching Oregon, Kelley contracted malaria and was forced to return, continuing to write newspaper articles encouraging emigrants to settle Oregon. Kelley’s tone is a milder contrast to Gilpin’s inflated rhetoric. In *Narratives of the Trans-Mississippi Frontier: A Collection of Five of His Published Works and a Number of Hitherto Unpublished Letters*, Kelley claims truthfulness: “fully conscious of [the writer’s] want of abilities to beautify his compositions with rhetorical embellishments, attempts nothing ... farther than to impress the public mind with simple and unadorned facts” (3). This direct appeal to audience indicates self-awareness and Kelley constructs a persona both unpretentious and reliable.

Manifest Destiny is also central to Kelley's vision, and he connects to a national history begun 150 years prior:

Thomas Jefferson, in his career of useful labours to his country, and ardent desires to advance its glory and the happiness of mankind, first suggested the plan of colonizing the territory, which, through his patriotic designs, had been purchased and partially explored. ...Whoever will, at the present time, attentively observe the meliorating improvements and reforms in human affairs, survey the different sections of the earth, and notice their natural and comparative adaptation to the peaceful operations of the civilized life, will be convinced that the time has fully come, in the order of Providence, when that uncultivated tract is to be changed into a fruitful field; that haunt of savages and wild beasts, to be made the happy abode of refined and dignified man. (4)

Kelley's diction is subtle and judicious; for example, "meliorating improvements" rather than Gilpin's "subdue the continent," and "patriotic designs" versus "confirm the destiny of the human race." Addressing his audience with more specific imagery than Gilpin, Kelley conjures an "uncultivated tract" currently occupied by the "haunt of savages and wild beasts." Kelley's text also includes a defense as an anticipated response to his audience's question of Why Oregon? Why now?:

Incalculable are the advantages, which Agriculture, Commerce, and Manufacturers in this country, will derive from the perennial resources of a trade with the Oregon Settlement. The staple commodities of the South, manufactured in the North, and then exchanged in the great market of the Oregon, will better

promote the three common interests of the States, than any system of imposts or revenue duties, which a wise and patriotic people can adopt. (74-75)

By flattering his audience as “wise and patriotic,” and in the passage prior “refined and dignified,” Kelley’s imagined reader is an emigrant ready to take advantage of Oregon’s available “perennial resources” as well as the “three common interests of the States” already in place—an emigrant ready for a better life. This vision is less Gilpin’s herculean conqueror and confirmer of destiny than smart businessman desiring a return on his investment, which undoubtedly appealed to all considering such an endeavor. However, Kelley proves consistent with Gilpin in his offering up proof of the emigrant's divinely-crafted fate:

Its peculiar location and facilities, and physical resources for trade and commerce; its contiguous markets; its salubrity of climate; its fertility of soil; its rich and abundant productions ... are sure indications that Providence has designed this last reach of enlightened emigration to be the residence of a people, whose singular advantages will give them unexampled power and prosperity. (75)

The historical record offered by invitation narratives is one of myth and movement as it worked to shape the ideological and physical American west. Neither the western past nor the western present make sense without first understanding the enthusiastic response of the Lewis and Clark expedition. The shaping of an idealistic emigrant found in newspapers and schoolbooks of the period was part of the collective response—that of a rugged individualist willing to endure a wild, dangerous, and romantic wilderness and working to fulfill a personal, spiritual, and national destiny. Combined with prophetic, prosperous language published through emigrant guides and texts from land speculators, the allure of a fresh start with land and opportunity proved, for many, too enticing to ignore.

Thus, to acknowledge the range of invitation and promotional texts is to examine the foundational aspects of a stubbornly persistent frontier vision. The new western territory opened by Lewis and Clark consumed the nation, and the messages of divine and advantageous entitlement represented in the texts described above, established a narrative of open and free access and the ease with which this landscape would yield itself for transformation. As subsequent chapters will argue, this narrative is foundational in understanding the American tendency toward land as exploitable resource and personal ownership as a right. These ideas work to inculcate a particularly dismissive ideology toward hybridized spaces while maintaining merit and inherent value toward pristine wilderness.

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Chapter 2: Frontier As Edited Reality: Narratives of Settling and Homesteading

The initial narratives of invitation described in the previous chapter show a western frontier shaped rhetorically as a tableau of adventure, health, prosperity, and land waiting to yield its bounty—an allure too great for many to ignore. A population of homesteaders was inspired to flow northward and westward, the numbers upward of 12,000 between 1840-1849 alone. By the turn of the twentieth century an estimated 400,000 homesteaders had gone west, and the narratives of homesteading and settling that these migrants were producing had become a flourishing genre. This chapter considers a group of such works produced by women in 1910-35 just following the initial invitation narratives. During a period where published texts were overwhelmingly represented by male authors—James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Nathaniel Hawthorne being some of the prominent authors of the time—these female voices yielded their own distinct contributions to Americans’ evolving beliefs and attitudes toward the American west. Through their embodiment of the tensions associated with promises of prosperity coupled with the daily hardships associated with working the frontier life, these four western writers depict through letters and memoir a personal female perspective—albeit curated—of navigating expectations and subsequent work on the frontier, all written toward an audience for publication.

This second wave of narratives presents a more complex collective perspective than the documents discussed in the previous chapter. On the one hand, the great majority of them evoke cultural values predicated on those invitation narratives, including self-sufficiency, determinism, reliability, pride of ownership, connection to others, and the consistent motif of encountering and working to civilize the wild, as the writers depict how they accepted the invitation west and forged new lives. Often written for family members or friends with an eye toward sharing their

personal experience more broadly, this set of homesteader texts display explicit awareness of fulfilling a journey whose mythic properties had captured the nation's imagination. This implied audience is an important aspect of the homesteader narrative, and these early texts are significant not just because they record history and early attitudes, but also because they embody and validate a response to the original invitation west.

Additionally, however, some of these narratives reveal a critical tension between the anticipated prosperous and idealized life offered by invitation narratives and the reality of the frontier's actual hardships. This smaller subset of homesteading narratives implicitly or explicitly concedes in their pages that promises of prosperity do not always result from the hard work of actual homesteading, and in their pages pastoral imagery is replaced by stories of hardship, toil, and struggle.

No matter whether they wrote idealized or disillusioned accounts or something in between, all the homesteader-authors discussed below began their western experience grounded in the promises detailed in the previous chapter, and that initial optimism has implications for the larger argument of this dissertation. As invitation texts encouraged them to do, early homesteaders as a group uniformly viewed the landscape for its potential and possibilities of yield, with water, fertile soil, minerals, vegetation, and animals that could either harm or provide sustenance. This anthropocentric position valued the natural environment—and all experiences associated with it—from a human perspective. The result is a confrontation with landscape, and the homesteader's view was a comprehensive definition of land as abundant resource with homesteaders not only entitled to such a landscape but also called forth to do the cultivating work of bringing landscape into its true destiny. From a broader perspective and for the purposes of this dissertation, homesteader narratives provide an integral link between texts of invitation

and early American nature writing. The motivations, compulsions, and anxieties of early homesteaders worked to shape a bifurcated ideology between healthy and unhealthy, desirable and undesirable, marginalized and valorized landscape that exists today in the West.

The homesteading narratives I have chosen to focus on here and hundreds more like them represent a determined fulfillment of Thomas Jefferson's yeoman dream. In his *Notes on Virginia*, published in 1784, Jefferson clearly delineated America from Europe, the latter where "lands are either cultivated, or locked up against the cultivator" creating a scenario where manufacture was a "necessity" (174). Unlike Europe, argues Jefferson, the American people "have an immensity of land courting the industry of the husband-man...Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people...Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example" (174-175). This belief in the virtues of agrarian life and those working the landscape created a particularly solid ideology of the American West, says Walter Nugent, "enriched by the Louisiana Purchase" and "opened by Lewis and Clark," helping establish "the Jeffersonian vision and the agrarian, homesteading ideal" as "inseparable" (13). This sense of rectitude by homesteaders connected directly to their labors, further cementing the idea of domesticating land with righteous living; thus, argues Conevery Bolton Valenčius in *The Health of the Country*, "Wildness, newness, possibility, and health bore a close and interdependent relationship" (17).

As many homesteading texts also explicitly show, these early pioneers and developers were aware of their involvement in altering the same landscape with which they were entwined. Homesteaders' personal sense of agency within the landscape was born of an urgency to do the nation's work as well as fulfill an invitation toward a reinvented, virtuous, industrious life. The result of this labor was an intimate, anthropocentric relationship with the natural world. As Mark

Fiege explains, "interaction between irrigators and nature created a new, complicated landscape in which human and natural systems overlapped, intermingled, and finally merged," a relationship, says Fiege, "dynamic, ambiguous, often inscrutable" which "forced farmers to acknowledge that they could not always control nature as they wished" (13). As this domestication of the uncultivated landscape continued, "[homesteaders] grasped for new metaphors and images to explain their relationship to the complex environment in which they lived" (13). The growth of townships and communities into larger cities coupled with increasing use of mechanized, efficient farming methods resulting in a view of the wild, uncultivated environment as quite separate from the civilized.

The four narratives discussed below hold particular merit for an examination of the values working to shape this complicated cultural view of the environment. While all four authors evoke aspects of the aforementioned themes of self-sufficiency, determinism, pride of ownership, personal health, community, and working to civilize wilderness, they also display the diversity of response to actual frontier circumstances noted above. The first two—by Elinore Pruitt Stewart and Agnes Cleaveland--fall strongly into the majority camp as their narratives resolutely celebrate a promise fulfilled. The third narrative from Mary Hallock-Foote reflects a less resolute and more anxious view of frontier life while making strong associations between landscape and physical health. In the fourth, in contrast to the first two, Annie Pike Greenwood starkly challenges the cheerful canonical myth, depicting her own frontier experience as one of hardship, emotional despair, and even betrayal.

Elinor Pruitt Stewart: Unbounded Optimism, Vitality, and Determination

Elinor Pruitt Stewart's *Letters of a Woman Homesteader* is particularly enthusiastic in its adherence to the frontier theme of self-sufficiency and arguably one of the most in-line with the invitationalist myth of all homesteader memoirs about the American West. Stewart's text portrays a stalwart commitment to the work associated with promises of prosperity and the virtues associated with early land settlement. Originally published in 1914, Stewart's text is a collection of letters addressed to her former employer Mrs. Coney. Positioning the reader *in media res*, the letters are an account of the single mother and young daughter having made the decision to emigrate from Colorado to Wyoming, following the death of Stewart's husband in a railroad accident. "Are you thinking I am lost, like the Babes in the Wood?" Stewart inquires of her friend Coney in her first published letter, regarding Stewart's decision to become a western land owner. Offering no back story regarding her prior life, Stewart's letters instead begin with her arrival to Wyoming and meeting her new employer, "Mr. Stewart" (4). Pruitt-Stewart's focus then shifts to her 160-acre claim and urgency toward the daily work of cultivating her piece of wild Wyoming landscape.

With unwavering optimism and enthusiasm—two themes congruent with early invitation narratives and early homesteader ideology—Stewart describes the attributes of her land location:

I thought it would be very romantic to live on the peaks amid the whispering pines, but I reckon it would be powerfully uncomfortable also, and I guess my twelve can whisper enough for me; and a dandy thing is, I have all the nice snow-water I want; a small stream runs right through the center of my land and I am quite near wood. (7-8)

In these initial, recorded perceptions, Stewart displays delight in the discovery of her physical competence and confidence in navigating her new landscape, which she seems eager to credit for her new sense of self. Responding to Coney's questions about mail service in another paragraph showing this characteristic tone, Stewart explains there is "no rural delivery" but despite the "two miles to the office ... I go whenever I like. It is really the jolliest kind of fun to gallop down [to town]" (13).

Stewart portrays homesteader life through colloquial, conversational language, her narrative choices presenting an especially ebullient, approachable persona, rendering familiarity and intimacy to her narrative. Stewart's implied narrator focuses on the enthusiasm and rewards found in her homesteading endeavors and landscape, rather than the anxieties and inevitable dangers associated with her relocation. However, Stewart's text also offers a deep engagement with her surroundings, and the indefatigable cheer permeating these letters belies a homesteader with a deep appreciation for the aesthetic beauty appearing concurrently alongside the landscape's bounty. These aspects of Stewart's narrative reveal an underlying theme of connection to the natural world consistent with aspects of the homesteader experience that were more closely aligned with that of the environment, including the mutual health of both settler and land.

Stewart is consistent with other homesteader narratives in her anthropocentric positioning—writing from her personal perspective toward her new, foreign environment. Throughout these letters, Stewart communicates her connection to her landscape, demonstrated by her ability to "notice" her surroundings—a word Stewart uses twelve times in various forms to describe her observation. Nature is often depicted vividly and with wonder, with Stewart particularly interested in the quality of light she encounters: "It seemed as if we were driving

through a golden haze. The violet shadows were creeping up between the hills, while away back of us the snow-capped peaks were catching the sun's last rays" (10). When Stewart describes morning light and vapor rising around a snow peak it is with allusions to jewels: "Fancy to yourself a big jewel-box of dark green velvet lined with silver chiffon, the snow peak lying like an immense opal in its center and over all the amber light of a new day. This is what it looked most like" (42). In other letters, Stewart continues to astutely observe details about both the landscape and animal encounters: "In the cañon the shadows had already fallen, but when we looked up we could see the last shafts of sunlight on the tops of the great bare buttes. Suddenly a great wolf started from somewhere and galloped along the edge of the cañon, outlined black and clear by the setting sun" (9).

Stewart's letters also render a clear, established connection of a woman homesteader to the health of the natural environment and her own vitality. With content and specific language indicative of her vigorous, industrious nature, Stewart's relationship to her landscape is one of perseverance and survival, themes running throughout early homesteader narratives but also congruent with constructed characteristics of the imagined audience of early invitation narratives. When a surprise snowstorm catches Stewart and her daughter in potentially dangerous conditions, she exemplifies self-sufficiency and cool headedness, despite being a great distance from home and without sufficient supplies. "Here I was thirty or forty miles from home, in the mountains where no one goes in the winter and where I knew the snow got to be ten or fifteen feet deep. But I could never see the good of moping, so I got up and got breakfast while Baby put her shoes on" (33). The theme of resiliency permeates much of the content of Stewart's letters surrounding ranch life as well, and in a tone containing discipline, tenacity, and pride, all tenets of Jefferson's idealistic, yeoman farmer, Stewart describes her work. "I have done most of my

cooking at night, have milked seven cows every day, and have done all the hay-cutting, so you see I have been working. But I have found time to put up thirty pints of jelly and the same amount of jam for myself" (18). Notwithstanding the challenging variables associated with weather and ranch life, Stewart's letters render living on the American frontier as a spirited, grand adventure—a romantic discourse displaying the bounteous results from toil.

Beyond anecdotes of her homesteading success, Stewart's letters also imbue nature with stark agency she often combines with wonder, a stylistic move indicative of Stewart's proximity to her environment and her increased intimacy with the landscape: "On every side of us stretched the poor, hopeless desert, the sage, grim and determined to live in spite of starvation, and the great, bare, desolate buttes. The beautiful colors turned to amber and rose, and then to the general rush for the fire and to get supper! Everything tasted so good!" (10). At other times, this agency gives way to anthropomorphizing, as Stewart continues to navigate her connectivity and intimacy with her natural surroundings, imbuing the animals, in particular the birds, and landscape with human characteristics: "The meadowlarks kept singing like they were glad to see us" and "The larks were trying to outdo each other and the robins were so saucy that I could almost have flicked them with the willow I was using as a whip" (29/231). Another passage makes the analogy between landscape and humans even more distinct in Stewart's use of simile: "We were driving northward, and to the south and back of us were the great somber, pine-clad Uintah Mountains, while ahead and on every side were the bare buttes, looking like old men of the mountains, --so old they had lost all their hair, beard, and teeth" (59).

This deep sense of connectivity toward landscape and well-being is also reflected in Stewart's relationships with her surrounding human community. The theme of communal life with others living off the land is strong throughout Stewart's letters, indicating no demarcation

between the work associated with procuring and preparing food and the act of sharing with others. A chance encounter with neighbor Zebulon Pike following the aforementioned, unexpected snowstorm provides the introduction to a central figure in Stewart's community and is Stewart's first encounter with Pike's generosity that becomes ubiquitous in future letters. Pike offers shelter and food to Stewart and daughter Jerrine: "How we feasted on some of the deer killed 'yisteddy,' and real corn-pone baked in a skillet down on the hearth" (37). Soon, Stewart hears about Mrs. Louderer, a widowed German woman. Christmas with Louderer sees Stewart helping prepare food for sheep camps surrounding the area—a volunteer act of good will by Louderer. In rich detail, Stewart provides further evidence of the value of shared resources within community:

There were twelve camps and that means twenty-four men. We roasted six geese, boiled three small hams, and three hens. We had besides several meat-loaves and links of sausage. We had twelve large loaves of the *best* rye bread; a small tub of doughnuts; twelve coffee-cakes, more to be called fruitcakes, and also a quantity of little cakes with seeds, nuts, and fruit in them,—so pretty to look at and so good to taste. [...] I had thirteen pounds of butter and six pint jars of jelly, so we melted the jelly and poured it into twelve glasses. (69)

Stewart goes on to describe the surprise and joy she and Louderer encounter at the camps upon the feast's delivery, and the ubiquitous homesteader themes of personal duty, community, resourcefulness, and rewarding labor are particularly clear in her description of service to others.

Stewart's letters from the frontier conclude with the same resolute positivity with which they began. Providing Coney a list of dutiful accomplishments on the ranch, including potato growing and harvesting, putting up several tons of vegetables, pickle and "catchup" making,

chicken raising, and flower tending, Stewart's resolution for the collection of letters is a statement of hardy enthusiasm: "I have tried every kind of work this ranch affords, and I can do any of it. Of course, I *am* extra strong, but those who try know that strength and knowledge come with doing. I just love to experiment, to work, and to prove out things, so that ranch life and 'roughing it' just suits me" (282).

Clearly displayed in the content of her letters, Stewart's temperament reflects sanguine fortitude and self-sufficiency, and the mettle reflected in these letters is congruent with the assurances seen in the narratives of invitation that offered success on the frontier to those willing to bring hard work, determination, and a sense of duty fulfilled. But Stewart's letters offer something additional. In them is a sense of deep personal connection to landscape and community—certainly through the toil associated with laboring to farm—but more than that, Stewart's sense of observation and appreciation for that which surrounds her is clear throughout, revealing an implied author with values associated not only with the rewards following hard labor but also one deeply appreciative and reflective toward the aesthetic beauty and sensory pleasure found in her natural environment:

To me, homesteading is the solution of all poverty's problems, but I realize that temperament has much to do with success in any undertaking, and persons afraid of coyotes and work and loneliness had better let ranching alone. At the same time, any woman who can stand her own company, can see the beauty of the sunset, loves growing things, and is willing to put in as much time at careful labor as she does over the washtub, will certainly succeed; will have independence, plenty to eat all the time, and a home of her own in the end. (215)

Agnes Morley Cleaveland: Pride, Ownership, and Aesthetic Appreciation

Agnes Morley Cleaveland's narrative *No Life for a Lady*, although sharing many characteristics with Stewart's, such as optimism, determinism, and self-sufficiency, focuses more deeply on aspects of pride associated with personal land ownership. Writing from the perspective of her childhood self, spanning 1874-1930s, Cleaveland transitions to adulthood on the frontier. Broadly depicting the events leading to her railroad developer father's untimely death at 38, Cleaveland's narrative becomes intently focused on events once she, her mother, and brother arrive at their New Mexico land claim and encounter their new landscape: "Ray had beaten me to a first glimpse of the new home, but I beat him to the idea of parceling out the landscape amongst ourselves" (27/28). The narrative continues throughout this passage to reflect strong associations between self and the landscape. "'That's my mountain,' Ray echoed, waving toward another area of piled-up mountain bulk, 'and that's my cañon on the other side of it'" (28). "'Lora can have West Pass,' I hastened to say. 'It's really the prettiest scenery.' 'Lora ought to grab her own scenery,' Ray muttered as he prepared to help unload the wagon" (28). The idea of scenery waiting to be "grabbed" resonates not only for its overt ownership but also for its representation of an immediate, verbal connection to landscape. A few pages later, Cleaveland recalls her speechless response to her first view of the Rio Grande valley: "I had no words at all. I was taking that scene into my heart and soul as my country for so long as I should live" (32). The language Cleaveland uses to acquire the landscape, here as a physical sensation, is notable. When the construction supervisor of their new home explains the family property boundaries, "'See'—Henry Davenport pointed north—'there's the Alamosa this side of the malpais, and the North Plains; and a little east of that long dike—the Mexicans call it Trinchera—is your folks' Los Esteros Ranch," Cleaveland again follows with a statement of ownership: "But it was not

thus literally that I had taken that land into my possession. It did not matter to me whose it was in the sense that Henry Davenport was talking about. By my own standards it was mine" (32).

Cleaveland also employs elements of self-positioning beyond land ownership, connecting to her landscape through a detailed description of aesthetic appreciation combined with awareness. Following a passage where she vividly describes the variations of color within the landscape with unabashed enthusiasm, Cleaveland is particularly reflective of her isolation:

So many shades of green! The pine and spruce on the higher elevations, aspen a little lower down, piñons and juniper on the level stretches. So many brilliant hues of wildflowers on the valley floor! Lavender desert verbena, scarlet patches of Indian paintbrush, great blotches of yellow snakeweed. And above it a turquoise sky with white wooly thunderheads resting upon the mountain peaks. I emerged from a juniper thicket into an open space; on my small buckskin pony I was a speck of humanity in a vast region of solitude. (44)

Although evocative, the last sentence reveals feelings of diminishment within a vast landscape, a common anxiety of many homesteaders encountering an environment both new and strange, contributing to initial feelings of unsettlement and the desire to cultivate, domesticate, and bring order to a foreign terrain.

Mary Hallock-Foote: Anxiety for Personal Health Coexisting with Affirmation

Although alluded to in the aforementioned narratives, the theme of anxiety toward displacement and concern for personal health are paramount throughout Mary Hallock-Foote's frontier narrative of resettlement, *Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West*, published in 1972, thirty-four years after her death. Born in Milton, New York, in 1847, Hallock-Foote was raised

Quaker and attended seminary school before studying art in New York City. An accomplished artist-illustrator by her early twenties, Hallock-Foote brought an educated, artistic aesthetic to her homesteader move west, initiated by her marriage to Arthur De Wint Foote, a mining engineer. Raised in an eastern upper-class tradition with artistic training, Hallock-Foote's implied author portrays her navigation of a vastly different environment, both physically and socially, as one closely entwined with personal health and vitality. Although initially following Arthur's mining career with the New Almaden mine near San Jose, California, Hallock-Foote lived in several different western locations, including Colorado, South Dakota, and Idaho, where Arthur initiated a major irrigation project on the Boise River. Hallock-Foote's memoir renders a tableau of life in these different western environments, particularly in California and Idaho, often revealing the effects of frontier climate on her personal health and the health of those around her.

Traveling by rail to California, Hallock-Foote notes what she has heard about her future location with "beauty and climate second to none in the world" (140). However, upon her arrival to San Jose, Hallock-Foote finds herself reckoning with new realities:

It had not been a subject our forebears dwelt upon, but it was admitted (generally as a thing of the past) that to be acclimated to our neighborhood—possibly to the neighborhood of the millponds—one had to reckon with a turn or two of chills and fever. Undoubtedly the ponds when they sank low in summer were a menace, but I should never have thought of malaria as an objection to bringing my California baby home (157).

Indeed, Hallock-Foote's infant son Arthur becomes ill from malaria; however, unlike most early homesteaders, Hallock-Foote's economic status afforded her the means to return east with young Arthur to "give him the sea air" for recovery (157). This belief in the positive health effects of a

specific landscape is recurrent throughout homesteading narratives as knowledge of landscapes considered sickly or healthy was often noted.

In one of Hallock-Foote's later passages, she displays awareness of the difference between city life in Boise, Idaho, where the family owned a home, and life "on the mesa," in terms related to health. When daughter Agnes becomes ill with scarlet fever in Boise, Hallock-Foote quickly packs to depart "for a six weeks' quarantine on the Mesa" leaving behind "a trail of hard work" consisting of "clothes and bedding to be disinfected, rooms to be fumigated in the old way with pans of burning sulphur" (342). Once relocated to the mesa home, Hallock-Foote recounts the period of recovery, pausing, as she empties sick pails into the nearby ash pit to note the "feet of sunrise" (343). A following morning, Hallock-Foote contemplates her daughter's illness:

We never knew how we had got it. Germs walked abroad in the streets of Boise and sailed upon its dust-laden winds. We were used to wind and dust, but not when so highly charged with humanity. The dust of a clean wide mesa, or a boxed-in cañon with the river for its floor, is not the same as the sweepings of a city that had then no health board (343).

The language used to identify the biological factors associated with her daughter's sickness and the deliberate, expedient exodus to a landscape beyond the city speaks to an inherent understanding of environmental factors positively influencing health. Hallock-Foote also displays an early bifurcation between civilization and nature when she presents "The dust of a clean wide mesa" as superior to the "dust-laden winds" of Boise.

In addition to Hallock-Foote's memoir, her talent as an illustrator reveals an observant woman encountering an environment where homesteaders live closely intertwined with the

natural landscape. In the introduction to the collection *Idaho Stories & Far West Illustrations of Mary Hallock Foote*, Barbara Cragg and Dennis and Mary Ellen Walsh argue for the importance of the work:

While the illustrations and essays encompass customary Western themes of open country and isolation, they also address keynotes of settlement—and adaptation to a new environment and the building of home places. In doing so, they contrast sharply with other illustrations of the time which depict the Far West as wilderness or playground for masculine adventure. The Far West series deserves praise for the balance it brings to early images of the American West (xvii).

Yet Hallock-Foote's illustrations to her fiction still tacitly affirm the promise of abundance offered by invitation narratives. "The Orchard Windbreak," for example, depicts a young homesteader girl with a fawn. The girl, wearing a long white apron with hand on hip, looks down on the upturned deer, turned upward toward the girl's face. Both the girl and fawn look inquisitively toward each other, with the entire pastoral scene presented against a row of trees opening toward a second tree line in the distance. "The Choice of Rueben and God" portrays a couple overlooking an expansive river extending into the distance with a passing wagon train below them. While the woman appears to be looking at the wagons, the man's gaze is clearly directed toward the river and horizon beyond. Perhaps one of the most compelling images by Hallock-Foote included in the collection is "The Irrigating Ditch," which shows a young mother cradling an infant while observing an irrigation channel and gate adjacent to her feet. A manly figure appears in the distance, working the ground. Her gaze is not particularly cheerful, but suggests contemplation, perhaps concern. Hallock-Foote's illustrations are revealing

in their portrayal of homesteading figures frequently standing within a landscape of abundance—whether that bounty is fauna, water, or cultivated crops.

Annie Pike Greenwood: Aesthetic Appreciation/Unflinching Realism

While homesteading narratives such as Stewart, Cleaveland, and Hallock-Foote's echo mythical and idealistic frontier qualities represented in the promotional texts while also portraying the writers' positive personal connection with the landscape, others strike a darker note more rooted in toil. Annie Pike Greenwood's narrative explores a relationship with an environment bringing both joyous, aesthetic rapture alongside deep disillusionment and failure. *We Sagebrush Folks* offers an unflinching—and often divided—depiction of life on the early American frontier to that of Stewart, and Cleaveland's determined optimism. Rather than narrate her trail experience moving from Kansas to a Southern Idaho farm, the content of Greenwood's narrative emphasizes the work and challenges of domesticity related to homesteading itself within her new farm life, including such harrowing details as sick cattle, embattled crops, the logistics and challenges of canal building, tragic death, and the deteriorating mental state of her fellow homesteader wives.

Greenwood's use of explicit detail results in a more comprehensive, intricate account of early emigrant life than the aforementioned homesteader narratives. After departing Kansas and traveling by train to Idaho, Greenwood embarks and is transferred to a horse-drawn farm wagon to complete the journey to her new homesite, and she shares initial observations of her unfamiliar surroundings: "There was nothing but sagebush so far as eye could see, probably not interrupted for the Minidoka Mountains at our backs, though so blue they looked that the pastel green of the sage must have been screened in some tenderer atmosphere. Mountains that I learned so to love!

(13). Greenwood's following paragraph shifts abruptly in content and tone, a stylistic move consistent throughout her narrative. Moving beyond the pleasing aesthetic of the natural scenery, Greenwood extends her observation to include details less savory, a result of homesteader traffic: "we passed the wreck of an old steam-shovel, lying among the boulders. It had settled there two years before, when it had blown up, killing two men. Skeletons of steers and sheep lay among the pale gray-green bush—bleached bones of slaughtered animals, marking the sites where the laborers had camped"(13). Stewart concludes the paragraph with a vivid description of heaps of spent canned goods, a common sight in homestead areas: "Huge piles of empty tin cans, with ends gaping in ragged edges, were rusted by the rains and sunk into the buffalo-grass, those eager little soldiers marching in where space had been cleared of brush for the cook-tents" (13). From the outset, details such as these provide the reader an amplified view of the homesteader experience, rendering elements of unfiltered, observational truth to an account which, Greenwood insists, represents "the true stories of lives lived" (127).

Often infusing her paragraphs with a stylistic combination of startling realism and sardonic wit, Greenwood's narrative content incorporates wry humor into her accounts of challenging living conditions and people she encounters: "We did have wood-ticks, too, in spite of having more than our share of bedbugs ... I had to look the children over daily, and frequently I found a wood-tick, swelled blue, all Greenwoods, having nothing but blue blood. On common folks, of course, they would swell red" (45). This juxtaposition keeps Greenwood's implied reader off-guard about her identity—sometimes presenting as folksy but then abruptly revealing herself a sophisticated writer both stylistically adept and self-conscious, a position that presages the ultimately divided nature of her attitude toward the frontier.

From the beginning of her narrative, Greenwood appears the salty realist, eyes wide open to the difficult challenges ahead. Displaying a sharp understanding of the carefully crafted, powerful allure found in the invitation to move west, Greenwood recounts how the frontier pull proved too attractive for her husband to ignore: "Charley brought home a certain magazine published for city farmers, who love to make fortunes on the imaginary acres in their heads" (6). Next, Greenwood shows awareness of the high stakes involved in Charley's endeavor: "Only the one-in-a-thousand who succeeds ever gets written up in this really most attractive weekly. The issue that decided me not to stand in Charley's way to success sported a crowing chanticleer in full color on the cover" (6).

Greenwood's self-consciousness and her ability to depict it both in content and style adds literary richness to her text, allowing her to render frontier life not simply as observer or laborer. This awareness informs Greenwood's entire narrative, and it proves notable as a contrast from more traditional homesteading narratives' tendency toward the depiction of ultimate success displayed in the work of ordering a wild landscape. An example of Greenwood's self-awareness is displayed when describing the implications of her husband's involvement with building a dam at Milner, as she and Charlie face the additional challenge of navigating competing interests with new neighbors:

The *raison d'être* of Milner had been the building of a dam for diverting the waters of the Snake River into canals that should slake the thirst of the fertile volcanic-ash desert, before the flowing of the man-made streams the property of others than farmers—first the long-vanished Shoshones; next the trappers; following them the cattlemen and the sheepmen, disputing the land and murdering each other, but finally grumbly sharing their public domain. And now, at last,

the sheepmen and cattlemen were viewing the canals with dismay and were preparing to join forces against the interloping farmers, that hated class who would most surely drive these magnates farther and farther into the desert, nibbling away a little land here, a little land there, and fencing it against the flocks and herds (9-10).

Associating herself with one of the "hated class" of farmers, Greenwood represents a group of homesteaders who, through the Carey Act in 1894, allowed private companies to construct irrigation projects on land separated from the public domain. Greenwood's early comments here foreshadow the eventual loss of the Greenwood farm as debts and mortgages increased, an outcome not uncommon yet infrequently narrated in published homesteader texts.

For Greenwood, the landscape is both "beneficent" and "sinister"—simultaneously abundant and severe, a more pragmatic positioning of self and one acutely aware of the relationship between herself, her fellow homesteaders, and her environment (165). There is a balance Greenwood holds toward nature throughout her narrative as she recounts, with equal intensity and detail, the beauty of the landscape alongside the hazards. In Greenwood's landscape, the Snake River becomes a dichotomy of beauty and danger, embodied in a vibrant, living entity:

Beautiful, treacherous river! Her bed is composed of lava boulders, the edges of which have been rounded by a thick coating of creamy sediment, the same that makes the rocks lying along the very banks of her stream, at the bottom of the canon, look like the bones of prehistoric monsters. It is no place to swim and no place to wade, for there are some holes fifty feet deep in the lava crevasses, where a man might be sucked in, and under, forever. The Snake glides smoothly along,

as though anxious to escape observation, for man has robbed her of the greater part of her power. Not twenty years before the Snake was a rushing dragon, her stream high up on her canon walls, not placid green water as now, but scaley with silver lights and smoking with mists, a terrific force which one would have said no man could tame; yet tamed she is, though it is only the taming of a nature which is treacherous still. Rarely does human being enter this river and live to tell the tale. (267)

From the beginning of this passage, Greenwood's use of the words "beautiful" alongside "treacherous" suggest a natural environment both harmful and abundant, both in aesthetics and resources. Although "tamed she is" Greenwood concedes the river represents a compromised taming, one that remains "treacherous still."

Stuart, Cleveland, Hallock-Foote, and Greenwood thus offer strikingly different "takes" on the homesteading experience, perspectives not only different from each other but sometimes in distinctive contrast to the picture painted by the invitation narratives discussed in the previous chapter. Taken as a group, they thus offer a composite picture of early westerners' connection to landscape, telling readers much about the disconnect that at least sometimes occurred between the promises of prosperity and the hardships associated with the realities of homesteading. Additionally, these narratives offer an early appraisal of land value or deficiency, related to landscape aesthetic, fertility, and ability to imbue or devalue human health, ideas essential toward understanding the foundations of the American ideology toward pristine and hybrid spaces.

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Chapter 3: Historical Literary Nature Writing in America: Anthropocentrism, Romanticism, and Separation

The ways in which environment has come to be defined, used, and regarded in the West today are directly tied to the early homesteaders' positioning of themselves relative to their new landscape, as described in the previous chapter. At once emphasizing personal agency and describing the land's beauty and unbounded potential, their narratives created a sense of inherent separation of civilized, domesticated landscape from wild, pristine country.

Two persistent and opposing strains in American thinking and writing about the natural world in general (not just the West), which this chapter will explore in more depth, inform both those invitation and homesteader narratives and other kinds of narratives about wilderness. On the one hand is the anthropocentric perspective briefly mentioned above which holds that humans are the "crown of creation" and thus entitled—or even called—to tame the uncultivated to develop natural resources and landscape for their specific benefit. This ideology was embodied with particular fervor in nineteenth and early twentieth century writing about the Western frontier by developers and early settlers. On the other is the Romantic notion of wild nature as awe-inspiring, a holy sphere that can inspire humans to a higher nature involving enhanced spiritual development. This second perspective is a precursor to the view of nature as sublime—a distinct aesthetic literary outcome having an extended effect on texts and rhetoric and closely aligned with an appreciation for the fearsomeness, mystery, and grandeur of God's creation. Voiced in both the same period as the anthropocentric view and also prominent in late 20th and early twenty-first-century literature, the latter valorizes wild spaces in nature, presenting them as different in kind from other, civilized landscapes. This dissertation contends that these two distinct views of nature bifurcate developed and undeveloped spaces, contributing

to the devaluation and mistreatment of some western wild spaces, of which Rock Creek is a characteristic example, while simultaneously valorizing others.

Two Foundational American Perspectives on Wilderness

The Anthropocentric View

The recurring theme throughout homesteader texts of civilizing the wild and putting it to use depended upon an anthropocentric—humans as central—view which can be traced back to the Puritan anxiety toward wilderness. These early settlers of New England, strongly adhering to the Old Testament biblical worldview, found themselves in what Roderick Frazier Nash describes as a "wilderness condition," which called for the transformation of dark, dangerous, evil wilderness into an earthly paradise, work which served their God-ordained destiny. Nash cites seventeenth century writing "permeated with the idea of wild country as the environment of evil" (36). Indeed, Puritan fear and contempt of wilderness is seen in William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, Michael Wigglesworth's *God's Controversy with New England* (1662), and Cotton Mather's *Decennium Luctuosum: An History of Remarkable Occurrences in the Long War Which New-England Hath Had with the Indian Salvages* (1699), the latter which purports that Indians were actually under the influence of the Devil, acting on his behalf.

The way in which these early American writers think about wilderness can arguably be traced through layers of historical and cultural ideology. Marxist theorist Raymond Williams provides a helpful framework for this cultural discussion in a chapter in his 1977 book, *Marxism and Literature* titled "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent" which offers rhetorical and

ideological grounding for studying contemporary attitudes toward wilderness. Williams argues that "the complexity of a culture" is found in its "variable processes" and "social definitions" but also in "the dynamic interrelations at every point in the process of historically varied and variable elements" (121). In other words, any identifiable set of cultural behaviors or norms has ongoing interrelations between its past and present, represented in the ways its inhabitants speak about and utilize elements of its history. The dominant or established contemporary understanding toward wilderness use, particularly the use of urban wild spaces or those spaces considered hybrid—working landscapes on the edges of and within communities—is largely residual, grounded in the narratives of invitation and homesteader cultivation of the untamed landscape.

While Williams argues that any contemporary culture includes available elements of its past, and that "their place in the contemporary cultural process is profoundly variable," he makes special note that the residual, "is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present" (122). This implies that residual culture can, for example in the context of this dissertation's argument, remain an active agent for shaping current ideologies surrounding wilderness, thereby influencing the ways in which we define and treat these spaces. Williams continues by defining "emergent" as connecting historically to both the residual and dominant ideology: "By 'emergent' I mean...that new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created" (123). Such theory is clearly relevant to the historically romantic texts framing this chapter as well as contemporary attitudes and contemporary romantic nature texts discussed in subsequent chapters.

The humans-as-central theme extended into the nineteenth century, with much of Nathaniel Hawthorne's writing drawing on the persistent Puritan concept of a contemptible

wilderness, one Hawthorne associated with man's dark and untamed heart. Hawthorne's protagonist in his short story "Young Goodman Brown," published in 1835, confirms Goodman's worst fears—hidden in the dark wilderness are local villagers, including his own wife, consorting with the devil and displaying the evil tendencies of man. Taking this theme to culmination is Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*, published in 1850. In it, the primitive, seventeenth-century forest surrounding Salem and protagonist Hester Prynne are symbolic of both freedom and danger. Prynne's illegitimate daughter Pearl, borne of Prynne's relationship with Arthur Dimmesdale, the minister of the local church, is described as an "imp of evil, emblem and product of sin" (110). Pearl is also the only character completely at home in the wilderness. For Hawthorne and the Puritans, there existed a terrifying gulf between civilization and wilderness. Therefore, in light of the importance Puritans placed on conquering and vanquishing wilderness, westward expansion was celebrated as one of their greatest achievements, evidence of God's blessing.

For many homesteaders, entering the wilderness was predicated on the view of man as a blessed, crowning achievement of God's creation, holding particular weight in the work of claiming and settling the West. Protestant theology during the period was dominant—a 1790 census represented eighty-eight percent of the American Caucasian population as Protestant—and although the primary religion emphasized man's salvation as connected to "Sola fide" or faith alone, with the authority of the Bible as sacred text, Protestants also believed that man's good works would necessarily follow as a result of faith ("The Protestant Mainstream"). As the language of the invitation narratives makes evident, homesteaders believed that their settling of the frontier was among such signs of salvation, literally God's work. Such an attitude has been demonstrated in Chapter 1 with Charles Dana Wilber's climate theory—"the rain follows the

plow"— and William Gilpin's bardic prose, equating the North American continent to a chosen landscape of "destiny" awaiting emigrants willing to perform their sacred duty.

While many emigrant homesteaders arrived with such Protestant ideology intact, a religious revival, collectively named The Second Great Awakening, had arguably an enhancing impact on the Protestant underpinnings of homesteader attitudes toward the landscape and its cultivation. Beginning around 1790 and peaking in the 1850s, this religious revival took place in homestead communities—and elsewhere across the country—in the form of "camp" gatherings. These informal religious events were often held outside around a campfire, facilitated by a traveling preacher. These "saddlebag preachers" or circuit riders rode on horseback around a particular geographic area in order to spread the gospel—largely Methodist—and convert those uninitiated to Protestantism. In addition to providing many homesteaders their first experience with religion in their new landscape, these camp gatherings worked to promote social and communal unity. David Mathews argues that the Second Great Awakening was actually a process of small community organization "help[ing] to give meaning and direction to people suffering in various degrees from the social strains of a nation on the move into new political, economic, and geographical areas" (27). Homesteaders visited by the circuit riders and attending these camp gatherings would be likely acquainted with the Bible and hold its central teachings prominently in their lives, thereby embracing an anthropocentric ideology.

Such an ideology, after all, was central to the Bible, which offered teachings beyond any specific period of awakening or Protestant approach. Regarding the natural world, the Bible's declarations in Genesis offer a particularly anthropocentric pathway for man's relationship with his environment: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over

all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (*The Holy Bible, King James Version*, Genesis. 1.26). Two paragraphs following this declaration is repeated, accompanied by an additional word, "subdue": "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (*The Holy Bible, King James Version*, Genesis. 1: 28). The anthropocentric homesteader and developer work of conquering and civilizing a vast, unbounded continent thus might have been seen as fulfilling the very commands of God to "dominate" and "subdue," bringing untapped, God-given resources into human use.

Such a message would have seemed particularly resonant to nineteenth and early twentieth-century homesteaders due to improvements in contemporary technology, which might have seemed to make "subduing" an inevitable, ordained process. Irrigation became more prevalent as a means of diverting water to arid parts of the western plains; thanks in part to John Deere's 1837 introduction of the steel plow, farming efficiency was improved, enabling farmers to cultivate and manage larger tracts of land. The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869 was an additional factor in a country undergoing vast economic, geographic, and environmental change.

Accompanying these physical changes, however, was a shift in ideology toward science and wilderness. The anthropocentric, conquer-and-cultivate attitude permeating the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries began to give way toward a recognition of wilderness not only as diminishing resource but also as a realm with real possibility for a broader sense of value and appreciation.

Enlightened Romanticism

Nash in *Wilderness and the American Mind* traces the historic trajectory of the American mindset during this transitional time regarding what he calls "the wilderness definition." a shift from his previously defined "wilderness condition." Nash argues that the European Enlightenment of the seventeenth century followed by the American Enlightenment, spanning the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, produced a period which began to see a shifting attitude toward wilderness away from a realm that needed vanquishing: "in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, wild country lost much of its repulsiveness" says Nash. "It was not that wilderness was any less solitary, mysterious, and chaotic, but rather in the new intellectual context these qualities were coveted" (44). This "new intellectual context" was the result of European discoveries in astronomy and physics marking the Enlightenment, a period historically positioned as 1685-1815, a time of intellectual advancement and questioning of authority. The American Enlightenment overlapped this period, yielding the aforementioned improvements of the railroad and farming methods along with such thinkers as John Locke, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson, all credited with inventing ideas that would have far-reaching influence on the American mindset such as deism, republicanism, tolerance, and the concept of scientific progress.

While introducing the broader ideas of deism, republicanism, toleration and scientific progress, The Enlightenment also concurrently strengthened the belief in divine oversight, contributing to a shift in the way nature was regarded. Nash argues "the awe that increasing knowledge about the solar system engendered extended to the great physical features of the earth" (45). The result of this awe was a notable change in the concept of wild nature. Although the majority of Americans still saw the wilderness as hostile, the post-enlightenment period

demonstrates a movement toward appreciation of nature largely grounded in its association with the divine. Homesteaders, already in direct relationship with the natural world and typically indoctrinated to a form of religious Protestantism, were uniquely positioned to demonstrate this shift toward appreciation and awe toward a divine landscape they worked to cultivate, a position I refer to as "Enlightened Romanticism."

These early interpretations of landscape grounded in wonder can be seen in the homesteader narratives described in Chapter Two, represented particularly in the text of Agnes Morley Cleaveland, Annie Pike Greenwood, and Mary Hallock Foote. Cleaveland's description of her New Mexico landscape, appearing suddenly as an interjection amidst a broader story of reclaiming a stolen horse from Indians, focuses primarily on conveying her wonderment at the landscape's broad range of color:

So many shades of green! The pine and spruce on the higher elevations, aspen a little lower down, piñons and juniper on the level stretches. So many brilliant hues of wildflowers on the valley floor! Lavender desert verbena, scarlet patches of Indian paintbrush, great blotches of yellow snakeweed. And above it a turquoise sky with white wooly thunderheads resting upon the mountain peaks (44).

One-hundred-and-fifty pages later, Cleaveland breaks from vivid stories of horse rustlers, ill cattle, and encounters with grizzlies to again marvel at her natural surroundings, this time in a description of rabbit brush: "the miles upon miles of woody-stalked, gray-green-leaved bushes that often grow shoulder-high blossom out in the fall into a mass of bloom that even to prejudiced eyes is a glorious riot of yellow and gold" (293).

Despite her pessimism about the potential success of homesteaders, Greenwood, like Cleaveland, shows admiration and astonishment through her depictions of the cycle of seasonal

colors found in her environment. She also exhibits pride in a cultivated, altered landscape:

"Never a day passed that I was not thrilled with the changing beauty of the vast cloud-filled skies, the purple and gold sunsets, the blue and white mountains, our gray and green valley, our own lovely, undulating farm, with its ivory wheat-fields, its green beet-fields, its purple-blooming alfalfa" (171).

Mary Hallock Foote's narrative exhibits the wilder features of the weather and mountains on the Southern Idaho landscape in a way that strongly evokes notions of the sublime: "The valley, changing from hour to hour, battlefronts of clouds forming along the bases of the mountains, charging, breaking, scattering in tatters and streamers wildly flying; tops of the mountains seen with ineffable colors on them at sunset and the nearer hills like changeable cut velvet" (135). A notable aspect of Foote's narrative is the association she makes between terrain and the holy:

The mountains of the Great Divide ... wade up through ancient forest and plunge into cañons tangled up with watercourses and pause in little gemlike valleys and march attended by loud winds across high plateaus, but all such incidents of the lower world they leave behind them when they begin to strip from the skies: like the Holy Ones of old, they go up alone and barren of all circumstance, to meet their transfiguration (171).

The passage reveals Foote's recognition of these particular mountains as manifestations of the divine—the word "transfiguration" a deliberate forging of the natural and the holy, a theme congruent with Ralph Waldo Emerson's Transcendentalism and later permeating the work of John Muir. A few pages later, Foote again connects her awe of the Rocky Mountains with the sacred:

Beneath that floor of heaven sat those Mighty Ones in a great convocation, those summits which turn the waters of the continent east and west. At sunrise or sunset, beholding their faces, you understood Ruskin's theory of the essential connection between spirituality and color: such rose, such blue and amethyst and topaz and purple! They were like great altar-pieces (and often as unregarded) set up before the eyes of those who burrowed in gulches and built cabins on ditch walks (175).

Using aesthetics of awe and wonderment to describe the American landscape—as demonstrated by the aforementioned homesteaders—represents a significant shift in the nineteenth century, one indicating movement from both the ideology of wilderness as formidable and unconquered and the perspective on nature as a manageable resource that would yield to human effort. Additionally, Nash argues, there was a response beginning to occur toward the diminishment of wilderness, beginning in the newly formed cities, largely fueled by artists and intellectuals nostalgic for a past period when humans were more closely aligned with nature (74-75). Although the massive changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution did not occur overnight, during 1870-1920, upwards of 11 million Americans moved from rural areas into cities as mechanized production became more prevalent (Hirshman and Mogford). The result of these changes in farming, production, and processing were accompanied by an ideological shift toward the remaining natural spaces which remained untouched. This shift was also grounded in patriotism and pride toward a landscape within which appreciation was considered a national duty.

Working to establish a nationalistic response toward the American landscape during the early nineteenth century is land speculator William Gilpin who, argues Nash, “pioneered in

defining 'picturesque' as the pleasing quality of nature's roughness, irregularity, and intricacy" (46). An important figure in the collective narrative of invitation (see Chapter 1), Gilpin is a rare representation of both points of view, using each for his own commercial purposes. In his 1860 text *The Central Gold Region*, Gilpin calls for every American to attend to an appropriate level of understanding and awe regarding the geography of their new landscape: "Our country is immensely grand, and to understand it in its simple grandeur, is not an extravagance, but is a homespun matter-of-face duty" (18). Gilpin continues, directly connecting aesthetic appreciation of American scenery to a nationalistic and divine obligation: "If we flinch from this duty, we recede from the divine mission chalked out for us by the Creator's hand, sink below the dignity of our ancestors, and fall into the decrepitude of the voluntary, illiterate, and emasculate subjects of Europe" (18). Throughout the text, Gilpin's language focuses on the grandeur associated with the geography of North America, connecting it to nationalistic pride, while positioning the American landscape as superior in comparison to Europe, South America, indeed, the rest of the entire world. When describing the global geographical location of the immense Andes mountain range, Gilpin establishes the supremacy and distinctness of the American mountains: "The 'mountain formation of North America is, then, an important section of this immense girdle, which bisects all the continents. It has an area, a massiveness and altitude, a position and climate, a fertility, a variety which blends all the peculiarities of all other sections, a simplicity of configuration, and a sublimity of profile which transcends all the rest" (58). Gilpin further elaborates on the exceptionalism of the California Sierra Madre range in America:

Thus, in the 'Cordillera Nevada de los Andes' is found the full equivalent of the South American mountains, volcanoes, active and extinct, crowned with glaciers and of immense altitude, battlements of columnar basalt, pedregals of lava,

subterranean and thermal streams. The plateau and its primary chains outrival in area and interest those of South America and Asia combined. Finally, the stern and stupendous masses of the Himalaya find themselves surpassed by the primeval bulk, the prodigious length and breadth, the immense mesas, the romantic parts, the far protruding slants, and the cloud-compelling icy peaks of the Cordillera of the Sierra Madre. (58-59)

Gilpin's language worked to establish a rhetorical style for "articulating appreciation of uncivilized nature" suggests Nash, while also working to link ideas of patriotic loyalty and pride to the American landscape (46).

The Evolving American Wilderness Aesthetic: Influences in Literature, Philosophy, and Art

The early homesteader texts and rhetoric such as Gilpin's, along with an increasing awe and appreciation for an expanded, scientific view of the universe, serve as important entry points for elements of the Romantic sublime—an aesthetic literary outcome of enlightened romanticism which Nash contextualizes as language revealing "wilder features of the natural world—mountains, deserts, and storms, in particular" (46). A more comprehensive definition of the sublime is offered in Edmund Burke's 1757 treatise "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful." Burke's seminal text provides further context for distinguishing crucial aesthetic distinctions between texts rooted in the picturesque—an acknowledgement and appreciation for landscape beauty, exhibited through language found in the homesteader narratives and that of Gilpin—and those which embody a more fearsome, deeply rooted aesthetic which the sublime illuminates. Burke's sublime is represented in that

which “is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror” (Part I, Section 7). Burke contends the terror associated with the sublime is analogous to astonishment, an emotion representing the sublime to the highest degree. Applied to aesthetics of the American western landscape, the sublime is evoked as a framework for qualities Burke identifies as vast, infinite, and magnificent. Whereas Burke considers beauty a passion of that which we love, the sublime is borne from a passion of that which is revered and feared, ideas which also connect to the grandeur of the Holy Spirit, aspects found in the texts of Ralph Waldo Emerson and John Muir.

Some of the foremost renderings of the aesthetic sublime are prevalent in the visual art of the period, and Thomas Cole's painted landscapes capture elements of the fearsome grandeur found in the American wilderness during the mid-nineteenth century. Other noted painters of the period, Frederic Edwin Church, Albert Bierstadt, George Catlin, and Asher Brown Durand render similar aspects of the sublime in their paintings of North American landscapes. An English emigrant landscape painter who relocated to Ohio in 1818, Cole is considered the pioneer of The Hudson River School, a group of artists who sought to depict the aesthetic grandeur of the American landscape, in particular, the landscape surrounding the Hudson River Valley. Inspired by the motifs and techniques of European Romantic landscape painting, Cole was the first to apply these techniques to scenery of North America. The natural magnificence of mountains, lakes, and wooded forests dominates his paintings, and the human figures are diminished in size, reduced to a fraction of each piece, representing an obvious shift away from the earlier, dominant anthropocentric view. As recently as 2018, curators of a collection of Cole's work at the Metropolitan Museum make a case for the artist's American paintings as a reflection

of the tension and anxiety acquired in his childhood England where he witnessed an encroaching industrial period. Connecting this personal history to two key works by the artist, one titled "The Oxbow," the exhibit focuses on Cole's depiction of a placid, curving Massachusetts river winding tightly through land with thick, untouched wilderness on one side, and a landscape of fields and farms on the other. Painted six years following the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and ten years following the opening of the Erie Canal, the painting is one of several, curators argue, celebrating the grandeur of the wilderness while also representing Cole's awareness of the changes occurring to the American landscape. Cole's work speaks to the broader bifurcation taking place during the period between a developed landscape of use and landscape of the Romantic sublime, with the latter becoming valorized and valued.

In addition to his painting, Cole's poetry and essays also expound on the pride associated with specific aesthetic features found in the American landscape. In his "Essay on American Scenery," published in *American Monthly Magazine*, an influential historical and cultural publication of the time, in January, 1836, Cole echoes Gilpin's sentiment as he offers a passionate entreaty to the American citizenry not yet engaged in appreciation toward the natural wonders of the environment: "It would seem unnecessary to those who can see and feel, for me to expatiate on the loveliness of verdant fields, the sublimity of lofty mountains, or the varied magnificence of the sky; but that the number of those who seek enjoyment in such sources is comparatively small" (2). Cole's essay encourages city dwellers, in particular, to "escape its turmoil—if only to obtain a free horizon, land and water in the play of light and shadow yields delight—let him be transported to those favored regions, where the features of the earth are more varied, or yet add the sunset, that wreath of glory daily bound around the world, and he, indeed, drinks from pleasure's purest cup" (2). Again, the position of bifurcation toward landscape is

clear as Cole distinguishes between the less desirable "turmoil" of civilized areas and those places offering a "free horizon," features "more varied," and an opportunity for unalloyed fulfillment.

As Cole does with painting, two of the period's literary giants, Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, evoke evolving wilderness ideology associated with romantic landscape in their respective texts. Irving, having already established himself as a successful storyteller with the publication of "Rip Van Winkle" (1819) and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820) returned to America after a seventeen-year stint in Europe eager to explore the American West "while still in a state of pristine wildness, and behold herds of buffaloes scouring the native prairies" (qtd. in Nash, 72-73). Irving's subsequent text *A Tour on the Prairie*, published in 1835, depicts his journey west as far as Oklahoma, infusing elements of European architecture in his descriptions of the American landscape: "We were overshadowed by lofty trees, with straight smooth trunks, like stately columns; and as the glancing rays of the sun shone through the transparent leaves, tinted with the many-colored hues of autumn, I was reminded of the effect of sunshine among the stained windows and clustering columns of a Gothic cathedral" (29). As Irving continues, he makes further, deliberate connections of the American wilderness to this prior experience: "Indeed, there is a grandeur and solemnity in some of our spacious forests of the West, that awakens in me the same feeling that I have experienced in those vast and venerable piles, and the sound of the wind sweeping through them supplies, occasionally, the deep breathings of the organ" (29). In linking the "grandeur and solemnity" of the North American wilderness to that of sacred space, Irving foreshadows other elements of romantic ideology toward landscape which associate wilderness with redemption and a pathway to spirituality seen in Thoreau, Emerson, and Muir.

James Fenimore Cooper's novels go further in echoing Cole, acknowledging openly as they do the vast contemporary changes even-then occurring within the North American landscape while simultaneously celebrating its grandeur. Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* in particular embodies this dual awareness. This set of five novels is set primarily in the upper New York wilderness, written over a period of eighteen years. The novel's main protagonist is the fearless frontiersman Natty Bumppo—aka "Leatherstocking," "The Pathfinder," "The Deerslayer," and "Hawkeye,"—a white man raised by Native Americans and educated by Protestants. Bumppo is a manifestation of the best of civilization—education and religion—while embodying a deep respect and morality toward treatment of the wilderness. Bridging a theoretical and physical gap between Native Americans residing in the natural world and the white civilized settlers, Bumppo personifies a connection between civilized man and an attitude toward deeply valuing the natural environment. Cooper's protagonist sees a wilderness containing both aesthetic and ethical value, a place witnessing ever-encroaching settlement. The first novel in the series, *The Pioneers*, sees an aging Bumppo as witness to a disappearing wilderness, settled and cultivated by those whose interests are incongruent with his own and whom Bumppo sees as incapable of understanding virtues inherent in the wild. In Chapter 26 of *The Pioneers*, Bumppo, in conversation with Oliver Edwards, a young American hunter associated with the settlement, relays memories of a spot where he first began to find solitude and connection to the wilderness: "Why, there's a fall in the hills where the water of two little ponds that lie near each other, breaks of their bounds and runs over the rocks into the valley. The stream is, maybe, such a one as would turn a mill, if so useless thing was wanted in the wilderness. But the hand that made that 'Leap' never made a mill." When questioned by Edwards, who has never read about such a place in books, Bumppo responds:

'I never read a book in my life,' said Leather-Stocking; 'and how should a man who has lived in towns and schools know anything about the wonders of the woods? No, no, lad; there has that little stream of water been playing among the hills since He made the world, and not a dozen white men have ever laid eyes on it ... To my judgement, lad, its the best piece of work that I've met with in the woods; and none know how often the hand of God is seen in the wilderness, but them that rove it for a man's life.' (Cooper)

American romantic writer Walt Whitman sided with Bumpo: industrialization and encroachment on wild spaces was an unfortunate, despoiling tendency. Bumpo not only places intrinsic value on the wild, natural state of the environment, but in his protagonist, Cooper also begins to connect the wealth of nature with "the hand of God," echoing sentiments found earlier in biblical texts as well as those of Muir and the early Christian conservation movement.

No two authors did more to promote a connection between civilized man and a life more closely aligned with the wealth of the natural world than Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Emerging from Romanticism, tenets of Transcendentalism, an American philosophical movement originating in the 1820s and 30s, professed man's inherent goodness, unlike Calvinism, which emphasizes innate human depravity and the need for God's grace. Inspired by values of Romanticism such as prioritizing emotions and imagination, holding nature as a source of beauty and truth, and the belief in the individual, Transcendentalism went farther than its Romantic counterpart in holding wilderness as an antidote to the corruption of society and institutions. Within the Transcendentalist philosophy, people are capable of realizing their best selves when they are both self-reliant and independent, and intuition and original insights are emphasized. Both Emerson and Thoreau embody Transcendentalist ideology, with Emerson

asserting that the supreme value of wilderness was its ability to move man toward a closer relationship with God through the human over-soul. Emerson's over-soul sees the human soul as an existing container for God who, residing in each individual, is able to connect and communicate without intervention. Thoreau's Transcendentalist focus framed wilderness as the means of an awakened sense of discovery and curiosity toward a richer, more conscious life, which he doesn't exclusively align with a supreme being or over-soul. Both Emerson and Thoreau subscribe to the belief that living closer to untamed wilderness provides more opportunity for man to transcend or become more morally aligned with a higher self.

Of the two contemporaries and friends, Emerson is credited with first establishing the tenets of Transcendentalist thought in "Nature," an essay written and published in 1836. The son of a Unitarian minister and an attendee of Harvard Divinity School, Emerson's "Nature" represents his move away from religion toward becoming a champion of individualism, which recognizes the moral worth of the individual. Consisting of eight sections: Nature, Commodity, Beauty, Language, Discipline, Idealism, Spirit and Prospects, Emerson's "Nature" is less a rumination on the natural world itself and more a guide for those seeking a deep, individuated consciousness.

Disturbed by what he saw as flaws and distractions of society, Emerson argues for the importance of experiencing the natural sojourn, separate from community: "To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars" (9). To be in solitude, according to Emerson's definition, meant to be immersed in your natural surroundings, unaccompanied. Emerson also believed it was only in this solitude that humans could connect with their individual consciousness to transcend the trappings of their societal

conditions and move closer to God: "In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, --no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, --my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, --all mean egotism vanishes" (10).

This vanishing of "mean egotism" is not a surrender of ego as contemporarily defined by Buddhist tenets, but rather an egotism associated with the trappings of the civilized world, a condition whereby retreat becomes necessary. Emerson's elevated celestial condition associated with wilderness is an echo of earlier rhetoric found in the invitation narratives, particularly in the prose of William Gilpin who saw the work of subduing the continent as an exalted, "untransacted destiny" which "cause[ed] a stagnant people to be reborn" (*Mission of the North American People, Geographical, Social and Political* 130). The submission described by Emerson allows for a fusion with the over-soul and God, a spiritual transformation or absorption, whereby the spirit and the body become one: "I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. The name of the nearest friends sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, --master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty" (10). The conditions for the transcendence of which Emerson speaks are only possible when one is removed from the civilized: "In the wilderness, I find something more dear ... than in the streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature" (10).

Compliant as a vehicle for spiritual transformation, Emerson's nature is also in a decidedly vulnerable position in relation to humans. In decrying humans' potential to bend the natural world to their own selfish and petty ends, Emerson is congruent with the work of his

contemporary, George Perkins Marsh, whose work is forthcoming in this chapter. In Chapter Five of "Nature," Emerson states: "Nature is thoroughly mediate. It is made to serve. It receives the dominion of man as meekly as the ass on which the Saviour rode" (28). The image of nature as a meek ass ridden by Jesus is one of the more vivid in this passage, and as Emerson continues, he details what he views as man's myopic use of the environment:

It offers all its kingdoms to man as the raw material which he may mould into what is useful. Man is never weary of working it up. He forges the subtile and delicate air into wise and melodious words, and gives them wing as angels of persuasion and command. One after another, his victorious thought comes up with and reduces all things, until the world becomes, at last, only a realized will, --the double of the man. (28)

Emerson's lament of domesticated nature as "only a realized will" is a departure from the ideology of the early homesteaders. Since the latter relied on landscape for personal health, survival, and prosperity, they held respect for its capacity to be developed. Emerson's natural environment is valuable not only for its utilitarian capacity to support human beings but as a means of spiritual enlightenment. Stated with clarity in Chapter 6 "Idealism," "Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us" (33). Through Emerson, nature exists beyond mere resource as an opportunity for closer connection to the consciousness, and as such, serves as a tool for spiritual transcendence.

While Emerson's text positions nature as a conduit toward a deeply moral, spiritually connected life, Thoreau's *Walden* serves as a test of Emerson's tenets. Although Emerson promoted solitude found in the natural world, his journals and writings do not reveal a man who ventured out to gain first-hand knowledge of his environment. In contrast, Thoreau made his

daily walks a religion, combining them with uninhibited curiosity about the natural world which he meticulously recorded and are still being used to study the effects of climate change. Widely considered an environmental manifesto, *Walden* chronicles Thoreau's two-year, two-month, and two-day experiment living apart from the community of Concord in a cabin he constructed on Walden Pond.

Walden outlines Thoreau's solution to a consciousness problem wrought by civilization. In the opening Chapter "Economy," Thoreau explicitly frames what he sees as the current predicament—that the very duty upon which the country has depended for settlement and growth pulls humans away from a more meaningful connection to the environment within which they labor: "I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in" (8). Continuing, Thoreau argues that the escalating demands of the working conditions of Americans create a life of engaged distraction, a condition thwarting higher consciousness: "Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them" (9). Thoreau's solution to these problematic conditions is congruent with Emerson's belief: spending time away from the distractions of the civilized, corrupt world not only cultivated a closer connection with the natural world, but it also created conditions necessary for engaging with an inherent, personal consciousness that could be heightened and more fully realized. This bifurcation between the natural and the civilized extends back to the homesteader narratives, seen in Mary Hallock-Foote's descriptions of

homesteader landscapes as superior to those in the city, particularly in her allusions to improved personal health on the "clean, wide mesa" (343).

However, reducing Thoreau and his experience at Walden as merely an experiment in "liv[ing] deliberately" is to miss the core tenet of the Walden text—that everything in nature is connected, including man, and when nature is allowed to be observed and experienced, civilized man can also experience a state of transcendence—a connected kinship with his natural surroundings. Thoreau's chapter "The Bean-Field" shows, through the act of hoeing beans, a recorded moment of transcendence, where Thoreau becomes more than cultivator, more than observer. Through the act of tilling the earth in preparation for beans, Thoreau attains a keen awareness of his own agency and begins to transcend time:

As I drew a still fresher soil about the rows with my hoe, I disturbed the ashes of unchronicled nations who in primeval years lied under these heavens, and their small implements of war and hunting were brought to light of this modern day. They lay mingled with other natural stones, some of which bore the marks of having been burned by Indian fires, and some by the sun, and also bits of pottery and glass brought hither by the recent cultivators of the soil. (127).

What Thoreau describes next is an integration between his labor and environment—a seamless fusion: "When my hoe tinkled against the stones, that music echoed to the woods and the sky, and was an accompaniment to my labor which yielded an instant and immeasurable crop. It was no longer beans that I hoed, nor that I hoed beans" (127). Continuing his description, Thoreau integrates other, seemingly unrelated natural elements to his labor:

The night-hawk circled overhead in the sunny afternoons—for I sometimes made a day of it—like a mote in the eye, or in heaven's eye, falling from time to time

with a swoop and a sound as if the heavens were rent, torn at last to very rags and tatters, and yet a seamless cope remained; small imps that fill the air and lay their eggs on the ground on bare sand or rocks on the tops of hills, where few have found them; graceful and slender like ripples caught up from the pond, as leaves are raised by the wind to float in the heavens (127).

For Thoreau, this melding of elements is less a revelation from God and more the result of practiced, focused attention. Thoreau concludes the passage with his intention: "It was a singular experience that long acquaintance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over, and selling them,—the last was the hardest of all, —I might add eating, for I did taste. I was determined to know beans" (128). To "know beans" is an example of the transcendence Thoreau seeks. The time at Walden returns Thoreau to a more simple and primal existence, the text a demonstration that such a heightened human consciousness requires wilderness and deliberate solitude.

However iconic in their contemporary cultural and literary standing, Emerson and Thoreau represent, additionally, an integral historical component to the lineage of rhetoric working to shape the American relationship with the natural world. Emerson and Thoreau's view of nature as God's conduit to human transcendence has roots in the romance of the Lewis and Clark journey and early calls for western settlement and continues through the words of homesteaders working to subdue a continent. The work of these two transcendentalists and their position within the American landscape forms a theoretical foundation which will continue to inform environmental ideology, both within this dissertation and within the broader scope of environmental literature.

In the ten years following the publication of *Walden*, Thoreau's warning about separation of man from nature took on added import as America continued to make improvements in agricultural efficacy and increase industry output. The 1855 World's Fair in Paris saw the unveiling of a reaping machine capable of harvesting an acre of oats in twenty-one minutes—one third the time of European models—and by 1860 America was the fourth largest manufacturing country in the world. These factors had a dramatic impact on the landscape and environment, changes which influenced the ideas of American diplomat George Perkins Marsh. After spending four years abroad as American Minister to Turkey, Marsh returned to America in 1853 and saw "nature in the shorn and crippled condition to which human progress has reduced her" (Marsh 11). Having traveled through Turkey, Egypt, Asia Minor, the Middle East, Greece, Italy, and Austria, Marsh was able to connect the environmental changes he observed in the Old World to America and became concerned about the environmental destruction he witnessed.

Marsh's 1864 text *Man and Nature; or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* tacitly evokes both the anthropocentric and the enlightened romantic perspectives on wilderness, simultaneously holding humans responsible for degradation of the environment while positioning them as superior to it. Viewed today as a forerunner toward environmental thought with an eye toward conservation and management, Marsh's work shows an early awareness of man's impact on the environment—industrial waste, forest depletion, and landscape alteration from railroads being some examples. "Man is everywhere a disturbing agent" claimed the former sheep rancher and mill owner, responding to such losses as three-fourths of Vermont's trees and the parts of Lake Michigan covered with timber from "all the forests in the States" (36/234).

Marsh's text saw three reprintings by 1907, and its influence, contends David Lowenthal, contributed to the American Association for the Advancement of Science's 1873 petition to Congress for a national forestry commission ("Nature and Morality from George Perkins Marsh to the Millennium" 4). Pointing to human land alterations such as railroads, irrigation, farming and ranching, clear cutting, mining, and river diversions, Marsh worked to bring awareness of "the changes produced by human action in the physical conditions of the globe we inhabit" (iii). Lowenthal concludes that for all the dire warnings permeating Marsh's text, it is concurrently suffused with "pragmatic optimism" with the "central themes—the need for reform...[and] faith in man's powers...characteristically American" as well as a strong focus on the future (19).

One of the earliest accounts mentioning the idea of climate change, Marsh's book makes a fundamental distinction between the natural world and man by making one of its primary tenets "to illustrate the doctrine, that man is, in both kind and degree, a power of a higher order than any of the other forms of animated life, which, like him, are nourished at the table of bounteous nature" (iii). The human ability to destroy and oppose the natural world, says Marsh, "tends to prove that, though living in physical nature, he is not of her, that he is of more exalted parentage, and belongs to a higher order of existences than those born of her womb and submissive to her dictates" (36). This "exalted parentage," Marsh explains, is a position within which man is always already above nature in a presumed hierarchy of creation and existence, aligning with the Protestant belief of man operating as God's crowning achievement. However, it is also this very distinction of alienation from nature, says T. Gregory Garvey, which serves as the "structuring principle of Marsh's environmentalism" (80). Although Marsh is explicit when he describes man's ability to denigrate the natural world, he is also interested in reforming it through careful management, argues Garvey, through a "combination of conservative politics and scientific

environmentalism [which] articulates a different, but no less influential approach to the issues man encounters in his relationship to nature” (110).

Marsh's explicit bifurcation of man and nature—simultaneously holding humans responsible for degradation of the environment while positioning them superior to it and capable of managing it—represents a complicated and self-contradictory amalgam of various positions described above in its early ideas toward conservation, including a position of supremacy, moral superiority, anthropocentrism, and increasing nostalgia toward a lost wilderness. Wrestling with a range of aforementioned changes and beliefs, including the new idea of wilderness as something majestic and sacred seen in Thoreau's writing and Cole's work, nineteenth-century Americans' response, beginning largely in the urban areas, was to seek reconciliation with a diminishing wild landscape and increasing pressure to preserve these remaining spaces.

Dawning American Environmentalism and Wilderness Exceptionalism

The desire to save primal wilderness was predicated on a belief that wilderness could be salvific and transformational. This synthesis of spiritual tenets and ideas introduced by the Enlightenment and explored by Emerson, Thoreau, and later John Muir, was "grounded in a vision that linked nature with spiritual redemption" argues Evan Berry in *Devoted to Nature: The Religious Roots of American Environmentalism* (18). Berry contends that early American environmentalism has been too easily attributed to a response toward Marsh's aforementioned concerns—the scramble to control "particular public goods, such as scenery, timber, and wild game" (61). Rather, argues Berry, it resulted from the emergence of "a synthesis of religious ideas and scientific knowledge" (61).

During a climate of nationwide economic growth and change fueled by both increasing industry and improvements to agricultural methods, feelings of instability were inevitable, and the natural, uncivilized landscape offered a romantic return to a fading frontier. Although the frontier would not be said to be officially closed until 1890, a declaration made by author Frederick Jackson Turner, Americans began searching for elements of reconnection with a diminishing landscape, particularly in more heavily populated areas. During the period of 1870-1920, cities absorbed eleven million people as migration from rural to urban areas increased. Language surrounding the natural world began to be shaped by the belief that wilderness could somehow restore the individual and offer what Berry deems "salvific possibilities" (59). Increasingly, these possibilities—whether represented as Thoreau's higher consciousness or as Emerson's redemption of spirit—could only occur beyond the boundaries of civilization in undeveloped wild places.

There is no better example of a life whose controlling ethos combined nature with spirituality than John Muir's. Born in 1838 in Dunbar, Scotland, and raised in a strict, Presbyterian household, Muir's father was an authoritarian who made his son read the bible daily. It is suggested that Muir's early fascination with nature was an escape from the strict household of his youth. Muir spent his early years exploring nature on walks with his grandfather before moving to Wisconsin in 1849 where the family built a home on an 80-acre tract of isolated land by a small lake. At 22, Muir attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he attended his first botany lesson. 50 years later, Muir wrote about the experience: "This fine lesson charmed me and sent me flying to the woods and meadows in wild enthusiasm" (139). After spending time in Canada, Minneapolis, and on various cross-country walking adventures, Muir settled in San Francisco, where he ventured for the first time to Yosemite. It was in

Yosemite where Muir eventually worked as a shepherd and experienced a landscape that would lead to some of his most inspired writing. John Gatta said of Muir, "...it is worth wondering how, within a late nineteenth-century climate of deterministic skepticism, John Muir managed to evolve a neo-Romantic nature philosophy steeped in religious mysticism" (147). Muir's "My First Summer in the Sierra" in particular, lays some of the important groundwork for the author as a wilderness theologian, and his blending of the natural world with traditional elements of Christianity are prevalent throughout:

June 6: We are now in the mountains and they are in us, kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver, filling every pore and cell of us. Our flesh-and-bone tabernacle seems transparent as glass to the beauty about us, as if truly an inseparable part of it, thrilling with the air and trees, streams and rocks, in the waves of the sun,—a part of all nature, neither old nor young, sick nor well, but immortal. Just now I can hardly conceive of any bodily condition dependent on food or breath any more than the ground or the sky. How glorious a conversion, so complete and wholesome it is, scarce memory enough of old bondage days left as a standpoint to view it from! In this newness of life we seem to have been so always. (161)

The natural "flesh-and-bone tabernacle...transparent as glass" rendering Muir "inseparable" from his landscape, recalls Emerson's transparent eyeball and elements of transcendentalism.

However, Muir's sense of obligation toward the landscape is also prevalent throughout his writings. Referring to the snowy peaks at the headwaters of the Merced, Muir speaks of his role as attendant: "Shall I be allowed to go to them? Night and day I'll pray that I may, but it seems too good to be true. Some one worthy will go, able for the Godful work, yet as far as I can I must

drift about these love-monument mountains, glad to be a servant of servants in so holy a wilderness" (161). In referring to himself as a "servant of servants" within this landscape, Muir's position is not one of supremacy; yet, even in his classification as lowly servant, Muir occupies a position of inequality.

Muir skillfully articulates the difference between civilized places of worship and the ones he has discovered in the Sierras: "No wonder the hills and groves were God's first temples, and the more they are cut down and hewn into cathedrals and churches, the farther off and dimmer seems the Lord himself" (237). This awareness and insistence on the inherent spiritual value of the uncivilized landscape sets Muir apart, argues Berry: "Muir's pursuit of a naturalistic theology unhampered by radical anthropocentrism situates him as the first of many twentieth-century thinkers who worked to harmonize theological ethics with a post-Darwinian view of the position of human beings in the natural order" (80). Berry also argues that the "primal spirituality" sought by Muir in these undeveloped landscapes is not simply "metaphorically parallel to Christian soteriology; it is drawn directly from it" (81). It is Muir's calling for a more intimate relationship with the wild while holding himself as both servant and particle of that wild that makes him compelling and challenging. Regardless of how Muir is categorized, transcendentalist or Christian naturalist, his insistence is for man to seek these wild spaces apart from the civilized, developed realm, further solidifying the bifurcation between these spaces.

Emerging from Muir's primal spirituality and his particular love of Yosemite are the preservation efforts for which he is the most famous, helping to establish Yosemite as a national park in 1890 and founding the Sierra Club in 1892. It was Muir's association with Gifford Pinchot, head of the United States Forest Service and proponent of the conservation movement that propelled Muir to one of his biggest preservation battles. Although both men were opposed

to reckless use of natural resources, Pinchot saw wilderness as resource, a tenet of conservation. An important development in environmental history simultaneously ended the friendship of the two men. Pinchot advocated for sheep grazing in forest reserves, a move Muir fiercely opposed, referring to the animals as "hoofed locusts" (185). Two camps were established with Pinchot championing the conservation movement and Muir the preservationist side. The men's contrasting views were never more evident than during the Hetch Hetchy debate. When the federal government proposed damming the Tuolumne River in the Hetch Hetchy Valley within Yosemite to provide water for San Francisco residents, Muir's fierce opposition is evident:

Sad to say, this most precious and sublime feature of the Yosemite National Park, one of the greatest of all our natural resources for the uplifting joy and peace and health of the people, is in danger of being dammed and made into a reservoir to help supply San Francisco with water and light, thus flooding it from wall to wall and burying its gardens and groves one or two hundred feet deep. This grossly destructive commercial scheme has long been planned and urged (though water as pure and abundant can be got from outside of the people's park, in a dozen different places), because of the comparative cheapness of the dam and of the territory which it is sought to divert from the great uses to which it was dedicated in the Act of 1890 establishing the Yosemite National Park. ("Hetch Hetchy" 814)

In his argument for the preservation of the Tuolumne River and Hetch Hetchy, Muir relies heavily on biblical language, ascribing damming efforts as "those of the devil" to destroy "the first garden--so much of the very best Eden fruit going to waste" (816). Toward the essay's conclusion, Muir amplifies his language referring to those calling for the damming as "temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism" who, in their quest "seem to have a perfect

contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar: "Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man" (817).

Although Muir might be the most dramatic example of seeking spiritual bounty in nature apart from civilization, the preservationist movement following Muir convinced others—including Aldo Leopold and Theodore Roosevelt—of the need to save the wild places representing ideas of salvation, redemption, and transformation. One of those subscribing to Muir's preservationist leanings was author Wallace Stegner whose "Wilderness Letter," written in December, 1960, served as the introduction to the Wilderness Act, defining wilderness as an "idea" and as such, "a resource in itself" (par. 1). Stegner had established himself as a successful teacher and novelist having taught at Stanford and publishing the biography *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West*. Arguing for the value of wilderness beyond mere recreation, Stegner's letter speaks to wilderness as an idea that has shaped the historical character of the nation (par. 2). Speaking directly to the contrast between the civilized and uncivilized, Stegner's wilderness letter advocates for wilderness as salve against the ravages of urban life: "Without any remaining wilderness we are committed wholly, without chance for even momentary reflection and rest, to a headlong drive into our technological termite-life, the Brave New World of a completely man-controlled environment" (par. 3). Decrying progress as a mixed blessing, Stegner argues for retaining places beyond man's domestication as a "means of sanity" and a representation of "the challenge against which our character as a people was formed" (par. 3). Framing the argument for preserving wilderness anthropocentrically, Stegner states, "It [wilderness] is good for us when we are young, because of the incomparable sanity it can bring briefly, as vacation and rest, into our insane lives. It is

important to us when we are old simply because it is there--important, that is, simply as an idea" (par. 3).

Stegner's letter is a crucial development toward understanding the contemporary ideology of man's bifurcation of the wilderness. The legislation for which Stegner advocated, The Wilderness Act, subsequently offers a conclusive definition of wilderness as a place "in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape [and] is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain" (Section 2c). The definition continues, specifying wilderness as "an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value" (Section 2c). By definition, The Wilderness Act separates civilized man from what is wild and primeval. The passage of the act in 1964 cemented an idea, a century in the making, of wilderness as romantic sanctuary, the results of which can be seen in contemporary representations of wilderness in the nature writing genre.

Though this conservationist/Romantic-Transcendentalist ethos toward wilderness might seem an unalloyed blessing for wild spaces in the American West, as this dissertation will go on to argue its bifurcation of wild, valorized spaces and those landscapes considered civilized or "working"—already subjected to anthropocentric “dominion”—has direct, contemporary, and

not always salutary implications for the way Americans today treat the natural world. In particular, as current texts continue to write wilderness as destination for retreat, renewal, transformation, and redemption from the trappings of urban areas, they tacitly encourage attitudes which marginalize urban wild spaces. Pristine “wilderness” should be lauded and preserved, they suggest; the urban wild is distinctly dispensable, worthy of no such celebration.

As the following chapters will explore in more depth, the anthropocentric-Romantic divide described above was not merely a notable historical feature of previous centuries. It still exists in contemporary attitudes about the American west, shaping literary and public-policy texts, permeating the attitudes of contemporary westerners themselves, and impacting the ongoing, everyday treatment of the public landscapes.

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Chapter 4: Contemporary Nature Writing: Romanticizing And Complicating

The previous two chapters established a bifurcated view of wilderness, one that embraced an anthropocentric exploitative approach to land use while simultaneously romanticizing wilderness as a landscape for spiritual renewal, redemption, and transformation. This chapter contends that the romantic view of wilderness voiced in early American writing about the natural world continues to be voiced prominently in many contemporary nature texts, advancing the argument that the earlier, established divide still influences contemporary views of wilderness and continues to shape how wilderness is understood, defined, and treated. Many contemporary writers continue to focus on landscapes considered pristine and often fearsomely sublime—landscapes that are romantically "other." Twenty-first-century romantic nature writing indeed shares numerous characteristics with early American nature texts, including its frequent tendency toward framing nature as retreat, a place for redemption and transformation—often with the intention to restore health and vitality. The result is a set of texts which actively influences the contemporary view of pristine nature as a retreat destination which, although often not deliberate, simultaneously ignores the hybridized, working landscapes existing outside this definition of wild. The work of Raymond Williams and his essay "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent" discussed in Chapter Three provides helpful grounding in this chapter.

Case Study: Montana and its Writers as a Contemporary Example of Residual Romance Regarding Landscape

A strong example of the aforementioned residual ideology associated with a romantic, wild west is deeply resonant in rhetoric employed in contemporary Montana. Although Montana's official website claims that its land is a "wild, untamed, [and] natural" territory, the

state's history and contemporary culture in fact include decidedly unromantic components, the product of exploitative attitudes toward western landscape. Montana is the site of Lieutenant George Custer's last confrontation with Native Americans in the Battle of the Little Big Horn and the home of mining barons William A. Clark and Marcus Daley, who capitalized on the state's abundant resources of gold, silver, and copper, their accumulated wealth translating to extravagant mansions, both of which—the battleground and mansions—are preserved and maintained for today's visitors. The cities of Anaconda and Butte both proudly display artifacts from their mining days. Anaconda's smelter stack continues to stand tall on the horizon, and the town's Old Works Golf Course uses slag—the byproduct of the process of smelting copper containing arsenic and lead—in their sand traps. Butte, sitting on a landscape once riddled with mining headframes, now advertises a distillery bearing the "Headframe" name along with tours of historic brothels, active during the town's mining boom into the 1960s. A gift shop sits adjacent to the Butte Berkeley Pit, one of the largest open-pit copper mines in the world, now an environmental hazard and subsequent Superfund site. The result is a paradox—while giving lip service to an untouched and “natural” landscape, the inhabitants of Montana clearly hold nostalgic pride toward their state's history of resource extraction.

Yet the allegedly virgin character of Montana is simultaneously and paradoxically exploited with great pride. Advertising "Big Sky, Big Adventures" Montana's website emphasizes the pristine, uncivilized grandeur of the state's landscape. The description of a trip through the Bob Marshall Wilderness focuses on decidedly romantic elements found in the preserved wild:

'The Bob,' as locals fondly call it, is one of the most rugged and untouched regions in Montana. You won't find any roads through the wilderness; you

have to hoof it on foot or on horseback (even bikes and hang gliders are banned) but it's worth the trek through the dense, old-growth forest for the hunting and untouched mountain scenery. Don't be surprised if you meet some of the residents of the wilderness as you explore: elk, bears, mountain lions, wolverines, bighorn sheep, bald eagles and more populate the Wilderness. (visitmt.com)

Similarly, a trip through Glacier National Park promises "rugged, wild, and incredibly scenic" views with opportunities to "raft or fish untamed waters. And chow down on a hearty steak supper or sleep in a restored railroad car" (visitmt.com).

Although the romantic descriptions of a rugged, untouched, and untamed landscape are also broadly prevalent throughout the western writing genre—seen in the earlier 1912 work *Riders of the Purple Sage* by Zane Grey and in Larry McMurtry's 1985 *Lonesome Dove* series, among others—two Montana writers whose work embodies such themes enjoy iconic standing among both critics and readers. These writers, Norman Maclean and Ivan Doig, warrant particular attention in their representation of the romantic, mythic ideology that continues to shape Montana and the larger west's attitude toward wilderness.

Echoing the salvific possibilities of wilderness found in Muir, Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*, first published in 1976, is a semi-autobiographical account of Maclean's life in rural Montana. Set in Missoula, the novel focuses on two brothers, one based on Maclean, the other his late brother Paul, and their relationship with their father. Within this trio of characters, the discipline of becoming a competent fly fisherman—a totem avocation in Montana outdoor life—is akin to worship, a key theme throughout the novel:

In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing. We lived at the junction of great trout rivers in western Montana, and our father was a

Presbyterian minister and a fly fisherman who tied his own flies and taught others. He told us about Christ's disciples being fishermen, and we were left to assume, as my brother and I did, that all first-class fishermen on the Sea of Galilee were fly fishermen and that John, the favorite, was a dry-fly fisherman. (1)

Maclean's story frames the act of fly fishing—and the wilderness in which it takes place—as sacred. Far from a casual hobby, Maclean's text presents both successful fishing and Christian redemption as equally earned through personal effort: "My father was very sure about certain matters pertaining to the universe. To him, all good things—trout as well as eternal salvation—come by grace and grace comes by art and art does not come easy" (4). The Big Blackfoot River is the majestic landscape feature most revered in Maclean's story, and the one place where the father and sons find agreement: "It is the river we knew best. My brother and I had fished the Big Blackfoot since nearly the beginning of the century—my father before then. We regarded it as a family river, as a part of us, and I surrender it now only with great reluctance to dude ranches, the unselected inhabitants of Great Falls, and the Moorish invaders from California" (13). Ownership associated with a particularly pleasing landscape is again evident, echoing a theme from the early homesteading narratives, particularly that of Agnes Morley Cleaveland in Chapter Two. The Blackfoot River is also the site of Maclean's descriptions of troubled Paul, who, in an exceptionally vivid fishing moment, seems to physically merge with the river, mirroring Thoreau's act of seeming transcendence when hoeing beans in *Walden*:

Below him was the multitudinous river, and, where the rock had parted it around him, big-grained vapor rose. The mini-molecules of water left in the wake of his line made momentary loops of gossamer, disappearing so rapidly in the rising big-grained vapor that they had to be retrained in memory to be visualized as loops.

The spray emanating from him was finer-grained still and enclosed him in a halo of himself. The halo of himself was always there and always disappearing as if he were candlelight flickering about three inches from himself. The images of himself and his line kept disappearing into the rising vapors of the river, which continually circled to the tops of the cliffs where, after becoming a wreath in the wind, they became rays of the sun. (Maclean 20)

The repetition of "halo" invokes a spiritual quality to the scene, further equating fly fishing to a holy act. As Paul descends into further personal trouble, the only available response to both father and sibling is to take him fishing on the Blackfoot. Maclean depicts fly fishing and the surrounding wilderness as both temporary retreat from Missoula and mediating force, able to render temporary connectivity within the family trio.

No less reverential but with more veneration toward the romance of labor performed in the Montana landscape—thereby evoking both sides of the exploitative/romantic divide—is Ivan Doig's, 1978 *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*. Chronicling Doig's life growing up in post-WWII rural Montana with his father Charlie and grandmother Bessie following his mother's death, Doig's memoir of Montana is told through the eyes of a wayward sheepherder's son. From the outset, Doig is intent to bear witness to his rural past, even as he has evolved away from it:

The sight of these two people of the past who had raised me—Bessie Ringer, ranch cook, diehard Montanan since her early twenties, when she stepped off a train in Three Forks with an infant daughter and a jobless husband; and Charlie Doig, ranch hand and rancher, born on a sagebrush homestead in the Big Belt Mountains south of Helena—the daily sight of these two in our Seattle living

room, with a shopping center out the window below, made me very much aware of the relic-hood of the three of us. In the strictest dictionary definition: “an object whose original cultural environment has disappeared.” (viii introduction)

A relic is also an heirloom, and Doig's memoir is as much a commentary on progress and change as it is a reverent homage to his family and Montana itself. In his opening chapters, Doig imagines the first settlers to the area of his family homestead with romantic awe: "It is not known just when in the 1860's the first white pioneers trickled into our area of south-central Montana, into what would come to be called the Smith River Valley. But if the earliest of them wagoned in on a day when the warm sage smell met the nose and the clear air lensed close the details of peaks two days' ride from there, what a glimpse into glory it must have seemed" (19). Continuing, Doig describes the landscape from an exploitative perspective, and in echoing the early homesteaders, accounts for the possibility found in the area's surrounding abundance. In this particular passage, the wilderness is written as willing sacrifice for the eager settler:

Mountains stood up blue-and-white into the vigorous air. Closer slopes of timber offered the logs to hew homestead cabins from. Sage grouse nearly as large as hen turkeys whirled from their hiding places. And the expanse of it all: across a dozen miles and for almost forty along its bowed length, this home valley of the Smith River country lay open and still as a gray inland sea. (19)

Doig's memoir reveals a landscape shaped by weather and the inherent, inescapable connection between the elements and those making a living from the land, a relationship working to shape lives and determine successes or failures: “Dad and I had lived our lifetimes beneath weather-making mountains, none of which tusked up into storm clouds as mightily as this Sawtooth Range of the Rockies would. In front of us now loomed the reefline of the entire continent,

where the surf of weather broke and came flooding across, and both of us knew what could be ahead when full winter poured down off these north peaks" (181). Again, writing from an exploitative perspective infused with romantic imagery, Doig describes a landscape of abundance, waiting to be put to use:

Down from the mountains as well, it turned out, this north country stretched as a land of steady expanse, of crisp-margined distances set along and straight on the earth. All the obliques of our valley life seemed to have been erased and redrawn here as ruler-edged plateaus of grassland, furrowed panels of grainfield, arrowing roads, creeks nosing quick and bright from the Rockies. The clean lines of this fresh landscape everywhere declared purpose and capacity, seemed to trumpet: Here are the far bounds, all the extent anyone could need. Now live up to them. (181)

With a landscape declaring its "purpose and capacity," Doig's text reestablishes themes found in the earlier conquer and cultivate narratives of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—including that of the aforementioned William Gilpin, discussed in Chapter 1—offering a view of a compliant landscape even as the awe-inspiring aspects of landscape beauty are celebrated.

Wilderness as a Context for Individuation

Celebrating the transformative potential of wilderness, contemporary nature writers like Maclean and Doig thus share themes found in Emerson, Thoreau, and Muir as they advocate for the unparalleled experience of the sublime found through solitude in the natural world. Some other contemporary nature writers' pursuit of the wilderness experience, on the other hand, deviates in distinct and pronounced ways from the early American nature writers in terms of expectation, intention, and execution. Whereas both Emerson and Thoreau sought transcendence

from the trappings of the civilized world for the purpose of connecting to the oversoul (Emerson) or for a broader human consciousness (Thoreau), other contemporary nature writers most often included in the ecocritical canon seek a highly individuated experience, one which pursues not a spiritual transcendence nor any particular connection to the sacred, but a deliberate move toward personal grounding—a tethering to something outside of themselves and their communities to satiate desire for improved overall physical and mental health. In contrast to Maclean and Doig, whose background intimately connected them with particular landscapes, these latter writers are in a sense “tourists,” deliberately traveling to wild areas to experience transformation.

Writers Cheryl Strayed and Gretel Ehrlich, to name two of this second group, have taken Thoreau's tenet of “live deliberately” literally, but in doing so they do not seek a contemporary oversoul or higher consciousness, but a personal reckoning. This redemption is predicated on a brokenness of self—Strayed by her mother's death, Ehrlich through life choices and broken relationships. Both authors’ perspective on wilderness as transformative tonic is rooted in self-interest and the residual cultural nostalgia of a wilderness with restorative capabilities.

No author better exemplifies the popular trope of wilderness as arena for personal rehabilitation than Cheryl Strayed in her 2012 novel *Wild*. With 1.75 million copies sold, the popular text has also been produced as a major motion picture, suggesting the theme’s appeal in contemporary culture. The memoir's subtitle “*From Lost to Found on the Pacific Trail*” immediately directs readers to the idea of wilderness as transformational healer. Strayed's decision to hike the Pacific Trail is subsequent to her mother's untimely death at 45, a loss that saw Strayed turn to drugs, alcohol, and promiscuity before seeking an immersion in the natural world:

I'd ranged and roamed and railed--from Minnesota to New York to Oregon and all across the West--until at last I found myself, bootless, in the summer of 1995, not so much loose in the world as bound to it. It was a world I'd never been to and yet had known was there all along, one I'd staggered to in sorrow and confusion and fear and hope. A world I thought would both make me into the woman I knew I could become and turn me back into the girl I'd once been. A World that measured two feet wide and 2,663 miles long. (4)

For *Strayed*, wilderness represents a personal journey with a distinct beginning and end. Unlike Thoreau, whose two years of observations saw him rooted in one location, Walden Pond, Stayed's narrative arc follows that of a predictable heroic journey. Outlined by scholar Joseph Campbell in 1949 in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, the journey necessitates an individual's withdrawal from community into a form of adventure, rife with dangerous trials. After bravely facing the peril, the individual returns and is transformed into a hero, resurrected, and reborn into a new life whereby he or she can share their story and lesson. Within *Wild*, Stayed embarks on her own version of this vision quest as she seeks to heal from her mother's shattering death: "It [the journey] was the thing that had grown in me that I'd remember years later, when my life became unmoored by sorrow. The thing that would make me believe that hiking the Pacific Crest Trail was my way back to the person I used to be" (17).

Throughout her novel, Stayed treats wilderness as a personal therapist, a literal replacement for her lost mother, and the landscape is secondary to her descriptions of the physicality of the hike: "I'd imagined endless meditations upon sunsets or while staring out across pristine mountains lakes. I'd thought I'd weep tears of cathartic sorrow and restorative joy each day of my journey. Instead, I only moaned, and not because my heart ached. It was because

my feet did and my back did and so did the still open wounds all around my hips" [referencing grief over her mother's death] (85). Thus Muir's theme of retreating from the city to be renewed is implicitly threaded throughout the novel; however, *Strayed* is transformed not through mountainous grand vistas but through pushing her own limitations, temporarily reframing her desires and motivations. "I could feel it unspooling behind me—the old thread I'd lost the new one I was spinning—while I hiked that morning, the snowy peaks of the High Sierras coming into occasional view. As I walked, I didn't think of those snowy peaks. Instead, I thought of what I would do once I arrived at the Kennedy Meadows General Store that afternoon, imaging in fantastic detail the things I would purchase to eat and drink—cold lemonade and candy bars and junk food I seldom ate in my regular life" (95).

Upon completing her 1,100-mile hike, *Strayed* reflects on her journey through it, crediting her immersion in the wild as purgative, equating the exterior wilderness to the personal landscape of individual growth:

It took me years to take my place among the ten thousand things again. To be the woman my mother raised. To remember how she said honey and picture her particular gaze. I would suffer. I would suffer. I would want things to be different than they were. The wanting was a wilderness and I had to find my own way out of the woods. It took me four years, seven months, and three days to do it. I didn't know where I was going until I got there. (27)

The conclusion of *Wild* reverberates with a parallel toward Thoreau's transcendence: "To believe that I didn't need to reach with my bare hands anymore. To know that seeing the fish beneath the surface of the water was enough. That it was everything. It was my life—like all lives,

mysterious and irrevocable and sacred. So very close, so very present, so very belonging to me. How wild it was, to let it be" (311).

In contrast to Strayed's peripatetic narrative, Gretel Ehrlich's *The Solace of Open Spaces* is, like Thoreau's *Walden*, deeply rooted in place, yet this book, too, treats landscape as a vehicle for personal transformation. Having relocated from Santa Barbara, California, to Wyoming, Ehrlich's move becomes permanent after her partner dies and she becomes a sheepherder. Like Thoreau and Doig, Ehrlich's residency allows her to keenly observe the skies, the changing of seasons on the landscape, and the physical strength required to work the land. Unlike Strayed who is journeying through, Ehrlich establishes deep relationships with others occupying the Wyoming landscape, contributing to her sense of place. Within this grounding and the sheepherding accompanying it, Ehrlich finds a surprising renewal:

Instead of producing the numbness I thought I wanted, life on the sheep ranch woke me up. The vitality of the people I was working with flushed out what had become a hallucinatory rawness inside me. I threw away my clothes and bought new ones; I cut my hair. The arid country was a clean slate. Its absolute indifference steadied me. (3-4)

Ehrlich renders a Wyoming landscape through a contemporary vision of western romance requiring cowgirl grit and strength, and the harshness of her conditions becomes integrated with her personal character:

Winter lasts six months here. Prevailing winds spill snowdrifts to the east, and new storms from the northwest replenish them. This white bulk is sometimes dizzying, even nauseating, to look at. At twenty, thirty, and forty degrees below zero, not only does your car not work, but neither do your mind and body. The

landscape hardens into a dungeon of space. During the winter, while I was riding to find a new calf, my jeans froze to the saddle, and in the silence that such cold creates I felt like the first person on earth, or the last. (2)

The savageness of Wyoming country which "steadies" Ehrlich is reminiscent of Annie Pike Greenwood's homesteading narratives, particularly in the way Ehrlich, with equal intensity and detail to Greenwood, acknowledges both malevolent power and a sense of awe in a landscape she has come to embrace:

Spring weather is capricious and mean. It snows, then blisters with heat. There have been tornadoes. They lay their elephant trunks out in the sage until they find houses, then slurp everything up and leave. I've noticed that melting snowbanks hiss and rot, viperous, then drip into calm pools where ducklings hatch and livestock, being trailed to summer range, drink. With the ice cover gone, rivers churn a milkshake brown, taking culverts and small bridges with them. Water in such an arid place (the average annual rainfall where I live is less than eight inches) is like blood. It festoons drab land with green veins; a line of cottonwoods following a stream; a strip of alfalfa; and, on ditch banks, wild asparagus growing. (8)

Balancing the severity of the Wyoming landscape and weather with its restorative qualities is at the heart of Ehrlich's narrative. When she states, "There is nothing in nature that can't be taken as a sign of both mortality and invigoration" it is just prior to her account of being struck by lightning, an event occurring on the Basin range where she rides and works. This occurrence is given one paragraph in the narrative, but it is arguably the most defining, one of cathartic transformation within the landscape:

There was a white flash. It felt as though sequins had been poured down my legs, then an electrical charge thumped me at the base of my skull as if I'd been mugged. Afterward the crown of my head itched and the bottoms of my feet arched up and burned. "I can't believe you're still alive," my husband said. The open spaces had cleansed me before. This was another kind of scouring, as when at the end of a painful appointment with the dentist he polishes your teeth. (88)

Although less overt than Strayed's depiction of transformation through landscape, Ehrlich's Wyoming is brutal, and "indifferent," offering renewal and unexpected personal restoration through a process of intentional, laborious rootedness.

Possessing qualities of sanctity, restoration, or fearsome indifference, the four texts discussed above voice a contemporary representation of nature that embodies a determined bifurcation between the civilized and the wild, still deeply rooted in the residual, romantic ideology of humans entering unknown, natural territory with the possibility for transformation. In recent years, however, other writers have begun to voice a new and contrastive perspective on wilderness as they acknowledge the complexities associated with environments such as the urban wild. Chapter 5 considers their work.

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Chapter 5: Contemporary Nature Writers as Realists: Using Ecocriticism and Natural History as Exploration

Immersed as many current nature writers are in the romantic ideology of escaping to the wilderness for renewal and transformation, another set of writers is concerned with providing an alternate—and, one might say, political vs. purely personal—perspective on the contemporary western landscape. In contrast to the writers described in the previous chapter, these contemporary realists implicitly critique the ways in which early expansionist narratives and their associated mythologies have shaped the current environment, both in terms of the actual landscape and the ideology associated with it. The texts they produce focus beyond pristine wilderness sanctuaries to feature spaces that exist as intersections between the wild and the civilized, landscapes which ecocritics and environmental scientists often define as hybrid—altered by ranching, irrigation, farming methods, and industry often within or in close proximity to urban areas. Such subject matter provides a context in which readers might begin to search for ways in which civilization and wilderness can be reconciled—an idea physically manifesting in hybrid spaces but also associated with cultural ethics and values toward the natural world—while simultaneously calling into question residual and emerging definitions of wilderness.

Narrative Theory and Natural History: Opportunities for Engagement Beyond Ecocriticism

The texts discussed in this chapter engage directly with the residual historical definitions and portrayals of nature described in previous chapters, thereby critiquing the anthropocentric ideology which informed settlement of the American West. Without exception they present a broad knowledge of their referential landscape's natural history—i.e. geology, anthropology, and biology—combined with the writers' description of their physical immersion within their chosen environments, and this combination of knowledge and experience results in a direct encounter for

the reader with the complex nature of actual vs. idealized landscape. Here the primary emphasis is not on the human ego romantically encountering the wilderness, as in the texts described in the chapter above. Instead, the wilderness itself holds the stage as a central character as these works acknowledge its current often-imperiled realities and explore how its sustainability might be achieved.

To begin considering the ways in which the texts to be described in this chapter, in particular, interpret the relationship between civilization and wilderness, a combination of ecocriticism and narrative theory is a useful critical perspective. In her 1996 introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the environment" offering an "earth-centered" approach as a companion to feminist and Marxist criticism (xviii). Glotfelty, along with ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment), founded in 1992, whose mission includes "the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature that considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world" and to promote "new nature writing, traditional and innovative scholarly approaches to environmental literature"(Glotfelty xviii). Interdisciplinary research has helped push ecocriticism into a widely-accepted critical field, and several peer-reviewed ecocritical publications exist.

Since Glotfelty's pioneering statement, ecocriticism has evolved, including an increasing interest from critics in connecting it to narrative form, providing a further method for studying the ways in which literature and the environment intersect. Perhaps most notably Erin James and Eric Morel, in their introduction to the 2018 special issue of *English Studies* focused on Ecocriticism and Narrative Theory, explain that a combination of ecocritical and narrative theory allows critics to "[turn] their attention to the very structures by which narratives represent and

construct environments for their readers, and are thus increasingly engaging in the concept and lexicon of...narrative theory" (355). Moving beyond Lawrence Buell's wave theory, used to categorize three deepening levels (or waves) of ecocritical engagement, James and Morel suggest that "ecocriticism today appears more like a banyan tree ...branches extend to form alternative yet interconnected trunks" (356). Applying narrative theory to ecocriticism, James and Morel further argue, represents "a new branch that may find its own ground from which to contribute to the whole" (356-7).

Within this narrative branching of ecocriticism, the interdisciplinary work of cognitive theorist Nancy Easterlin provides further context. As explained by James and Morel, Easterlin's grudge with ecocriticism is its propensity to "find the genre or form that will 'palliate the soul' to 'culminate in an environmentally friendly perspective'"(qtd in James and Morel 358). Easterlin's interest, then, lies in narrative as "agentive force" which works by "integrating the actions and purposes of human groups within their prescribed domain" (qtd in James and Morel 358). In this capacity, states Easterlin, "narrative brings into relation and coordinates sequence, causality, physical place, knowledge of interaction with human others, and self-concept" (qtd in James and Morel 358). In other words, exploring discrete differences in narrative mode and form holds implications for the ways ecocriticism can begin examining the intersections among the landscapes being written about, the position of the author, and the meaning generated for the reader. James herself calls this intersectionality a "storyworld" which "readers simulate and transport themselves to when reading narratives." From her 2015 collection of essays *The Storyworld Accord: Ecocriticism and Postcolonial Narratives*, James says readers generate "correlations between such textual, imaginative worlds and the physical, extratextual world" and

she credits "the potential of the reading process to foster awareness and understanding for different environmental imaginations and experiences" (qtd in James and Morel xv).

Founder of ASLE and ecocritic Scott Slovic concurs with the importance placed on narrative within an ecocritical context. In his essay "Seeking the Language of Solid Ground" Slovic outlines the role of the ecocritic as helping readers understand the work of other writers: "Ecocritics...must offer readers a broader, deeper, and perhaps more explicit explanation of how and what environmental literature communicates than the writers do themselves, immersed as they are in their own specific narratives" (34). Paramount to this process of "pulling things (ideas, texts, authors) together and putting them in perspective" argues Slovic, is the ecocritic's "awareness of who and why we're writing" (34). Slovic insists that storytelling provides the pathway to that awareness: "combined with clear exposition, [storytelling] produces the most engaging and trenchant scholarly discourse" (34-35). This discourse is possible, says Slovic, when writers and critics seek physical immersion within the landscape they study and incorporate personal storytelling into their critical work. Slovic concludes, "Ecocriticism without narrative is like stepping off the face of a mountain—it's the language of free fall" (35).

Professor and critic John Tallmadge contributes an additional piece to the argument for a more engaged method of inquiry that combines ecocriticism and narrative. In his essay "Toward a Natural History of Reading" Tallmadge makes a case for the use of field work—the deliberate personal engagement and immersion with the natural landscapes and environment found in these texts. If such engagement is to be responsible, Talmage argues, it necessitates the deep study of natural history which he defines as the "systematic reading...of all relevant criticism, theory, biography, and scholarship in allied disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, history, science, or religions" integrating "experience of the referential world—into interpretation and criticism"

(284). Tallmadge calls this method "erudition and engagement" (287). This discipline, says Tallmadge, "fosters attentiveness both to the work and to the referential landscape" (287).

Each of the writers in this chapter engages in the sort of higher ecocritical work that Talmage, Slovic, et al propound, combining elements of personal narrative with natural history-style discourse. The proportion and exact use in which these modes are employed, however, varies considerably among them, and as the discussion which follows argues, the consequence is an offering of decidedly different reading experiences and opportunities for reader engagement.

In contrast to the writers covered in Chapter Four, those aforementioned ecocritically-aware writers—whom I'm terming "contemporary realists"—make concern for landscape degradation (rather than personal psychology) the primary subject of their work. Drawing on techniques from journalism—both objective and editorial—these writers emphasize the facts of natural and political history while also chronicling personal engagement and definite opinion relative to particular places. At once acknowledging human culpability toward the vast environmental changes occurring during frontier settlement and continuing into the age of industrialization to the present, they explore reconciliation—an idea represented in hybrid landscapes as areas of intersection between nature and civilization but also rooted in the values, both residual and current, associated with these spaces. They raise questions about why landscape alterations occurred while inquiring how these areas can provide entry for exploring the long-held ideology of anthropocentric use of natural resources, often writing with an intention toward a more sustainable relationship between humans and the environment. These contemporary realists display a range of texts falling on a mode spectrum or scale with variable proportions of objective reportage and personal narration. Simultaneously, these texts embody various degrees of romantic self or ego-merging with the landscape versus representing

the environment as a central character. The result is a span of possible applications of modes and techniques used in various degrees allowing a broader examination of the literary means through which these writers engage with their respective landscape to create "storyworlds" readers use to analyze and create meaning.

Terry Tempest Williams: Romanticism, Ego-merging, and Emotional Engagement

On one end of the contemporary realist spectrum (writers who feature a blend of natural history-style reportage and personal narrative in their works) is Terry Tempest Williams, a writer whose work, though it includes thoroughly-informed knowledge of the natural world, relies much more heavily than the writers that follow on romantic, emotionally engaged personal storytelling. While Williams gives more objective attention and concern than the writers described in chapter four to the problems wild spaces are facing in the contemporary West—particularly in areas considered hybrid—her work evokes dominant themes of personal transformation, healing, and unity with wild spaces, drawing as the writers described in the previous chapter do on romantic tropes of merging with landscape psychically employed in the service of defining, transforming, and validating self.

Williams' 1991 text *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, which at once invokes the romantic paradigm of wild landscape as a place of retreat while explicitly documenting the human management that has made that particular landscape less than “pristine” wilderness, provides a particularly vivid example of her own writerly hybridity in all the respects just suggested. A Utah native with a degree in Biology, Williams casts her memoir as an interwoven narrative of objective and personal discourse, focusing on the rise of The Great Salt Lake in 1983-4 which caused the flooding of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge north of the

lake, and on the contemporaneous diagnosis of Williams' mother Diane with ovarian cancer. An 80,000-acre landscape, the Refuge is a managed watershed combining elements existing naturally with a system of dikes and water control structures that provide a variety of water depths suitable for the needs of different bird species. The disappearance of this bird refuge and the declining health of Williams' mother are frequently written with equal weight throughout the memoir, suggesting that the rights and lives of humans do not hold more value than other living things.

Williams' personal connection with birds and the Bear River Refuge begins in childhood retreats with her grandmother, trips which helped impress on her the significance of Bear River and its inhabitants. Finding magic at the refuge, where the freshwater Bear River flows into the northeast arm of the Great Salt Lake, Williams' early recollections are largely romantic, grounded in awe and reverence: "The days I loved most were the days at Bear River. The Bird Refuge was a sanctuary for my grandmother and me...We would walk along the road with binoculars around our necks and simply watch birds. Hundreds of birds. Birds so exotic to a desert child it forced the imagination to be still. The imagined was real at Bear River" (15). Retreating to the regularity of the birds into adulthood, Williams begins to claim personal ownership: "There are those birds you gauge your life by. The burrowing owls five miles from the entrance to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge are mine. Sentries. Each year, they alert me to the regularities of the land" (8). When Williams' burrowing owl mound is removed for a gun club, it marks the first moment of deep loss in the text, one Williams uses to foreshadow the decline and death of her mother, furthering the romantic ego-merging theme evident throughout the text.

Williams' memoir takes care to emphasize that while the Refuge serves as a personal retreat, its frequent employment of natural-history-style discourse emphasizes that the place has an identity distinctive from human projections with its own circumstances and problems. An important global bird flyway, Bear River is also a thoroughly managed area with shared stakeholder interests, a popular recreational location for bird enthusiasts, hunters, and fishermen, which Williams conveys early in her text. Williams uses dialogue between her childhood self and her grandmother Mimi during a visit to the refuge to establish the complexity of the landscape: "Maybe the best way to understand it," she [Mimi] said, "is to realize the original wetlands were recreated" (19). Continuing, Williams uses the child perspective to simplify the complexity of the refuge's inception:

The marshes were declining for several reasons: the diversion of the water from the Bear River for irrigation, the backing-up of brine from the Great Salt Lake during high-water periods, excessive hunting, and a dramatic rise in botulism, a disease known then as 'western duck disease.' The creation of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge helped to preserve the fresh character of the marsh. Dikes were built to hold the water from the Bear River to stabilize, manage, and control water levels within the marsh. This helped to control botulism and at the same time keep out the brine. Meanwhile, the birds flourished. (19-20)

Even as Williams challenges the residual paradigm of pristine, transformative landscapes through her ego-merging within a thoroughly managed landscape, her text also reflects aspects of this convergence on a larger scale, particularly in her last chapter, the often anthologized "The Clan of the One Breasted Women." Within this epilogue, Williams shifts her memoir distinctly in tone toward activism. The chapter opens with Williams' recounting of the nine women in her

family diagnosed with breast cancer, seven of which are dead. Williams connects the cancer diagnoses to the atomic testing taking place in Nevada from January 27, 1951-July 11, 1962, stating, "Most statistics tell us breast cancer is genetic, hereditary, with rising percentages attached to fatty diets, childlessness, or becoming pregnant after thirty. What they don't say is living in Utah may be the greatest hazard of all" (281). Witnessing one atomic test as a child north of Las Vegas, Williams' father provides her with more detail surrounding the event:

You were sitting on Diane's lap...It was an hour or so before dawn, when this explosion went off. We not only heard it, but felt it...We pulled over and suddenly, rising from the desert floor, we saw it, clearly, this golden-stemmed cloud, the mushroom. The sky seemed to vibrate with an eerie pink glow. Within a few minutes, a light ash was raining on the car. (283)

Here, arguing that violence upon the land is symbiotic with human suffering, Williams claims a collective identity: "It was at this moment that I realized the deceit I had been living under.

Children growing up in the American Southwest, drinking contaminated milk from contaminated cows, even from contaminated breasts of their mothers, my mother—members, years later, of the Clan of One-Breasted Women" (283).

Positioning herself within a larger female "clan" and making their collective suffering a form of unity—while making this suffering symbiotic with the landscape—is a shift away from the ego-merging found primarily in solitude throughout the memoir. This epilogue reinforces Williams' resistance toward bifurcating the wild and the civilized by presenting the landscape and humans as recipients of equal violence, while also presenting a collective call toward rebellion toward the violent offenders altering the landscape. Initially presenting her actual protest at the Nevada Test Site on May 18, 1988 as a dream, Williams weaves the real with the

imagined, describing women from all over the world "circling a blazing fire in the desert" (287). The dreamlike description continues with the women acting in maternal rebellion: "The women couldn't bear it any longer. They were mothers. They had suffered labor pains but always under the promise of birth. The red-hot pains beneath the desert promised death only, as each bomb became stillborn. A contract was being drawn by the women who understood the fate of the earth as their own" (288). The epilogue concludes with facts about the actual protest and the women activists being bussed to Tonopah, Nevada, and left in the desert.

Williams' text provides multiple ways of encountering landscape, integrating objective historical and geographical information with the deeply personal. Throughout *Refuge*, Williams utilizes high doses of emotional engagement and ego-merging with the landscape, a theme throughout her writing. Blending modes of objectivity with deep romanticism, *Refuge* offers possibility for further exploration rather than residual bifurcation of wild spaces by examining the ways humans and landscapes are united.

Brad Tyer and Jeff Crane: Historical Witnessing, Journalism, and Reportage

Representing the opposite end of this narrative scale are two writers who rely heavily on reportage with a distinct lack of ego/identity merging with the landscape. Frank and unflinching, Texas journalist Brad Tyer presents a largely unadorned account of the aftermath of mining operations in western Montana in *Opportunity, Montana: Big Copper, Bad Water, and the Burial of an American Landscape*. Following the tug of western allure, Tyer relocated to Montana in 2002, basing his move almost exclusively on a coffee-table book with its "Montana landscape porn: snow-draped peaks, steep creeks, weathered homestead cabins, and bighorn sheep grazing alpine meadows" (3). Once in Missoula and employed at the *Montana Independent*, Tyer become

enthralled with the Clark Fork River and its environs (3). The book that resulted is at once a memoir, a researched historiography, and an ecocritical account of the devastating alterations to the landscape surrounding the town of Opportunity and the Clark Fork River; it is also a study of the cultural attitudes shaping those changes. Tyler's title reveals his values toward industry and the environment, and both the preface and chapter one begin with uninformed observation:

"From this distance it looks almost like a half-buried, old-style McDonald's: two pale, parallel parabolas arcing side by side in a lateral shaft of sun" (preface xiii) and "The first time I saw the Clark Fork I wasn't sure I'd found what I was looking for. I'd imagined something else" (1).

Constructing the persona of curious adventurer with a beginner's mind available only to the newly transplanted, Tyler anticipates an environmentally conscious reader who, like him, finds themselves naive about and surprised by the poisoning of the Clark Fork. After attending symposiums and gathering facts, Tyler constructs a history of the Clark Fork: "I gradually began to gather that the Clark Fork wasn't quite what I'd thought it was," he reflects. "The river I had shadowed on my drive in had long been choked by the detritus of a century's worth of copper mining upstream" (4).

With complex, factually-packed sentences and diction largely void of romantic imagery, Tyler fashions himself an unmediated, journalistic witness—a curious truth-teller. Early in chapter one, Tyler concludes: "What the Clark Fork is, is the most fucked-up river I've ever met" (14). The use of vulgarity in this one particular passage is startling and intentionally vies for attention. Tyler has seen many rivers and—make no mistake—this river is severely polluted, beyond what you, reader, could even imagine. Continuing in straightforward, journalistic detail, Tyler outlines the marginalization of Opportunity's landscape:

Opportunity is a rural suburb of the town of Anaconda, founded by the Anaconda Copper Company in 1912 ... For most of the twentieth century, the adjacent Opportunity Ponds—four thousand acres of them—were used as a dump for Butte’s mine tailings and Anaconda’s smelter waste. Now even more waste, the tons that washed downstream from Butte ... are being scooped up with front loaders, packed into rail cars, and shipped back upstream to Opportunity. (16)

Tying the impact of the landscape back to the original copper mines that helped settle the area—mines that promised economic prosperity for a generation—is a deliberate and persuasive move to push readers toward historic connections and environmental consequences. Turning his diction again toward judgment, Tyler introduces readers to contemporary Opportunity: “About five hundred people live in Opportunity today. The Clark Fork burbles between poisoned banks alongside Opportunity’s pastures. The copper that wired America had a price, and Opportunity paid it. The restoration of the Clark Fork has a price too, and Opportunity is paying again” (16). Tyler chooses diction and sentence structure to convey specific imagery, strategically placing “poisoned banks alongside Opportunity’s pastures” and through his repetitive use of the word “price.”

Rick Bass, another Montana writer and environmental advocate, spoke with Tyler about the hidden aspects of western Montana not seen in tour guides and fishing propaganda. “‘The poison hasn’t gone away,’ he’d [Bass] said. ‘It’s simply redistributed. We need new stories to tell this truth, new stories built with old words.’” Tyler then continues, “One of those stories is about Opportunity... It’s a buried history of Americans’ attachment to progress and estrangement from consequence. The only way to read it is through a lens made of metal” (23). Pairing Bass's statement about stories with Tyler's metaphor for reading history as only possible through “a lens

made of metal” provides the author's sole means of reconciling the reader with the environmental reality he has outlined. Tyler presents no other vision for restoring the altered landscape around Opportunity, and he utilizes diction of culpability when offering an explanation for how Opportunity came to be in its current state:

The concept of necessary sacrifice strikes at the core of the deal that modern America—and the increasingly modern world—has made with itself: we’ll write this one off, and we’ll move along, not looking back. [...] It’s self-imposed blindness, failure to recognize, the discomfort of acknowledgement, that’s erasing Opportunity. EPA, the state department of environmental quality, and the Clark Fork Coalition have all published maps of the Superfund stretch from Butte to Missoula. Not one of them marks Opportunity.” (175-176)

Using “we’ll” twice in succession, Tyler implicates himself and his entire audience in Opportunity’s demise and erasure. With a resolute tone, evident in his use of the phrases “necessary sacrifice” and “self-imposed blindness” Tyler holds his reader partially responsible for this compromised western landscape, and this deliberate positioning is a transmission of guilt in the face of conquest while simultaneously offering no alternative to this “landscape sacrificed, river redeemed” narrative. Tyler almost seems to be presenting a confrontation to his reader.

Thus Tyler’s text spends a great deal of time recounting historical aspects of resource extraction and environmental consequences in southwestern Montana. And yet it also incorporates an unobstructed, on-the-ground, personal engagement with this particular landscape, seen largely through his vehicle of choice—a canoe. Late in the book, Tyler explains his propensity for canoeing, an action which he depicts himself doing throughout the text: “When you’re in a canoe, it’s said, you’re part of the scenery. Floating down the Smith River several

years later, a friend told me it looked like I was drifting downstream in a folded leaf. I liked the hell out of that" (91). The Bitterroot serves as Tyler's introduction to Montana rivers, and within this initial canoe voyage, Tyler employs his first notable romantic imagery, tying it to his own positioning within the environment:

It had been late September, a few weeks after I'd arrived, and something about the way the light deepened the shallow water and framed the mountains in sheets of laundered blue made me think this was where I was supposed to be. The scenery is spectacular down near Stevensville where I was drifting, where the river never wanders far from some fresh panorama of the sawtoothed Bitterroots looming to the west. (8)

Thirty pages later, Tyler provides readers his first-person account of the Bitterroot's opposite, the "fucked up" Clark Fork, persisting in a style of direct engagement with his environment: "I launch my canoe onto Silver Bow Creek from a patch of bare dirt in the easement of the Scenic Highway 1 crossing, twenty-six miles downstream from Lake Berkeley" (40). What Tyler sees—in contrast to the pristine Montana depicted in the coffee table book he mentions—are the physical ramifications of resource extraction firsthand, the impact of human action on the environment. In his description, Tyler returns to his prevalent reportage style:

The banks [of the river]... layered and crumpled like a cake that's been left out in the sun. Rising out of the water they're soil-brown, as you'd expect them to be, but without vegetation to hold them in place. They crumble and slump toward the water, and into it when it rises. On top of the soil you can see why: another three-foot layer of sediment, sickly orange fading to gray. This is mine waste, pulverized rock washed down from the tailings piles of Butte in high water

and deposited on the floodplain when the waters receded. In addition to nutrients and organic matter, the normal freight of floodwater, Silver Bow carries copper, cadmium, arsenic, and lead, thus the dearth of plant life--and fishers. Every time it rains the water erodes the poisoned banks and what fish have braved these extremities die (42).

Immediately following this passage, with the contrast established between the Bitterroot and Clark Fork, Tyler again shifts to a direct, personal encounter: "About a mile down I pass under Opportunity's Stewart Street bridge. even in the low flow I have to duck. I pass a beached tube of rusty culvert, then a USGS gauging station, a pale blue outhouse-sized shack dangling a flow meter into the channel" (42). One final observation within this passage encapsulates Tyler's view, one of keen, determined realist, intent on exposing landscape degradation while vividly aware of the beauty also still present: "Farther down, a profusion of wild pink roses has managed to blossom on top of a dead-dirt bluff" (42).

Also relying heavily on natural history-style discourse while including some personal narrative is Jeff Crane, whose novel *Finding the River: An Environmental History of the Elwha* offers a more edifying environmental vision of the Elwha Dam's construction and subsequent removal 80 years later. With generational ties to the river, Crane fashions the persona of a curious academic with a propensity for natural history. Crane's style is heavily journalistic, communicating reliability, from his use of historical texts and photographs of the period to his authorship of several other environmental texts. His implied audience is not just interested in the environment but also curious about broader connections to the region's natural history. Congruent with Tyler, Crane begins his narrative as a quest for information: "What sort of river is this now? More important, what is the 'best' Elwha River?" (3). Regardless of Crane's narrative

having a more positive outcome—both dams on the Elwha were removed—the text itself can be read as a new environmental story or, as Rick Bass suggests “a new [story] to tell the truth.”

Using Aldo Leopold’s land ethic as touchstone, Crane reconstructs the culture of the period inspiring the dam’s 1913 construction, noting the ways early American language of natural abundance anticipated environmentalist, romantic, and transcendentalist diction. To illustrate, Crane presents a 1901 article on the Elwha from the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*:

Beautiful, clear as crystal, rushing down from the snow-capped peaks of the majestic Olympics ... containing the energy of thousands upon thousands of horse power ... The Elwha, sublime in its majestic and awe inspiring scenery, is destined to become a mighty power for good in the hands of ingenious humanity, for the present and future generations. (qtd in Crane 44)

Offering a vision of the “mighty power” of the river harnessed “for good” by “ingenious” builders, readers can begin to identify the specific diction used during the period of early American industrialization in regard to the environment. As Crane helps clarify, “The rhetoric employed here notes that regardless of beauty and inspiration, the river’s highest purpose would be in service to mankind” (44). Crane concludes with two possible avenues for further redemption:

The restored Elwha River could be a cornerstone and model in this effort to create and extend a land ethic while reconstructing nature. Or, the Elwha could serve another, less positive purpose ... rivers like the Elwha, Klamath ... could well serve as ark rivers—uniquely healthy rivers that can preserve enough salmon stocks to reintroduce species across the region when and if we get on the other side of the global warming crisis. (212-213)

Although arguably centered in journalistic and reportage style, Crane also slips into personal narrative, primarily at the beginning of his text, offering readers a bird's eye view of the river through his experience of hiking above it:

From the Whiskey Bend trailhead, the river is a teasing presence, lying far below, with the trail providing occasional glimpses. But upon reaching Hume's Ranch and breaking from the trail down to the river itself, the sound gathers up, compelling an increase in gait as the river draws near. And what you see is worth the sweat you have produced by this point. The Elwha's beauty could serve as a model, an icon, of Pacific Northwest rivers. The deep green pools; the wide gravel beds with rich, aerated riffles; the variety of cobble and larger rocks in the riverbed—all suggest a perfect Pacific Northwest river, one that should roil with bright red and green-hued spawning salmon." (1).

The last line of Crane's passage evokes a particularly romantic vision of the river with language reminiscent of Muir and Doig: "The fog coiling down from the mountainsides and the bent branch of a hemlock or cedar dipping in a quiet pool, being tugged by the river, seemingly forever without end, create an image and place of Zen-like solace and beauty" (1).

Tyer and Crane's narratives offer two versions of the same theme—the consequences of human conquest in the name of progress and the inherent responsibility of humans toward a sustainable future environment. Their natural-history-heavy but still personally-engaged texts—along with those of other contemporary realists who use a similar approach (Tim Palmer, Julie Whitesell Weston, and Marc Reisner among others), provide an invitation for their audience to more deeply engage with the residual historical complexities surrounding altered landscapes—

just as the ecocritics referenced above urge. In so doing, these writers encourage readers to reexamine dominant ideologies and imagine the possibility of change.

Edward Abbey: Naturalist and Mystic

Whereas Williams merges heavy doses of romantic, emotional engagement with objective contextual information about and concern for the natural world, while Tyler and Crane examine environmental history through an anthropological lens with high levels of reportage and objectivity, the writer and early environmentalist Edward Abbey represents a conflation of natural history and personal narrative, serving as a midpoint on the spectrum of contemporary realist writers. At once deeply and romantically identified with a particular landscape, Abbey acknowledges a thorough, eyes-wide-open understanding of the landscape's history as well as its vulnerability. Born and raised in Pennsylvania, Abbey's first visit West just shy of his eighteenth birthday began an obsession. Abbey's text *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*, is a nonfiction, romantic realist account of Abbey's two seasons working as a park ranger outside Moab, Utah, in Arches National Monument in 1956-1957. During a period when Arches was largely undeveloped, Abbey witnessed increasing efforts toward making the park more accessible to tourists—a progression Abbey loathed.

A paradox from the outset, Abbey provides a disclaimer in his introduction about the challenges associated with writing accurately about the landscape he finds both multifaceted and mesmerizing yet desires to capture in words:

This is not primarily a book about the desert. In recording my impressions of the natural scene I have striven above all for accuracy, since I believe that there is a kind of poetry, even a kind of truth, in simple fact. But the desert is

a vast world, an oceanic world, as deep in its way and complex and various as the sea. Language makes a mighty loose net with which to go fishing for simple facts, when facts are infinite. (x)

However, Abbey proceeds to write a passionate book about the desert, chronicling his time at Arches, weaving adventurous narrative with geologic history within a deeply romantic account which frequently ascends into mysticism, although he purported to hate the latter. Chapter One "The First Morning" recounts Abbey's inaugural sunrise in Arches, viewed from his government-issued trailer: "Suddenly it comes, the flaming globe, blazing on the pinnacles and minarets and balanced rocks, on the canyon walls and through the windows in the sandstone fins" (7).

Continuing, Abbey abandons objectivity and begins to anthropomorphize: "We greet each other sun and I, across the black void of ninety-three million miles" (7). Earlier in the same chapter, Abbey begins a passage with a reporter's objectivity, only to move toward anthropomorphism: "Near the first group of arches, looming over a bend in the road, is a balanced rock about fifty feet high, mounted on a pedestal of equal height; it looks like a head from Easter Island, a stone god or a petrified ogre" (6). Abbey then abruptly interrupts and contradicts himself:

Like a god, like an ogre? The personification of the natural is exactly the tendency I wish to suppress in myself, to eliminate for good. I am here not only to evade for a while the clamor and filth and confusion of the cultural apparatus but also to confront immediately and directly if it's possible, the bare bones of existence, the elemental and fundamental, the bedrock which sustains us. I want to be able to look at and into a juniper tree, a piece of quartz, a vulture, a spider, and see it as it is in itself, devoid of all humanly ascribed qualities, anti-Kantian, even the categories of scientific description. To meet God or Medusa face to face, even if it

means risking everything human in myself. I dream of a hard and brutal mysticism in which the naked self merges with a nonhuman world and yet somehow survives still intact, individual, separate. Paradox and bedrock. (6)

This passage echoes sentiments from paragraph seventeen from Thoreau's *Walden*, in his chapter titled "Where I Lived and What I Lived For" in Thoreau's "wish to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life" (75). However, the anthropomorphizing of the natural which Abbey rails against alongside the "hard and brutal" mystical union of human and nature for which he longs are contradictions found throughout *Desert Solitaire*.

Recognizing his desire to possess the "paradox and bedrock" of the Arches landscape as his own, Abbey's words imply kinship with some of the early homesteader texts discussed in Chapter Two: "Standing there, gazing at this monstrous and inhuman spectacle of rock and cloud and sky and space, I feel a ridiculous greed and possessiveness come over me. I want to know it all, possess it all, embrace the entire scene intimately, deeply, totally, as a man desires a beautiful woman" (6). Yet, Abbey's sexualized desire is fused with his awareness that his wish, however futile, is predicated on solitude: "An insane wish? Perhaps not—at least there's nothing else, no one human, to dispute possession with me" (6).

Returning to the introduction, Abbey's last paragraph is another contradiction as he warns readers of the problem with reading *Desert Solitaire* and expectations accompanying a future visit to Arches: "Do not jump into your automobile next June and rush out to the Canyon country hoping to see some of that which I have attempted to evoke in these pages" (xii). However, continues Abbey, if tourists must come, he suggests only one way to experience the landscape: "In the first place you can't see anything from a car; you've got to get out of the goddamned

contraption and walk, better yet crawl, on hands and knees, over the sandstone and through the thornbrush and cactus" (xii). In condemning the "goddamned contraption," Abbey invokes a theme of resisting the movement toward making spaces such as Arches more accessible to humans. This theme is more heavily explored by Abbey in his fictional novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, where acts of sabotage are used to promote environmentalism, ideas adopted by the group Earth First! However, Abbey's voice against what he calls "Industrial Tourism" in *Desert Solitaire* is clear: "Why is the Park Service generally so anxious to accommodate the other crowd, the indolent millions born on wheels and suckled on gasoline, who expect and demand paved highways to lead them in comfort, ease and safety into every nook and corner of the national parks?" (56).

Abbey's account of his beloved landscape rendered with romance, reverence, and mysticism, grounded within the realism of geological and biological history and actual experience of life in the desert sets him apart from the other contemporary realist writers featured here. In this mingling of romance and realism, often conveyed with large doses of cynicism, Abbey continues to exist as a paradox—at once boldly desiring a romantic claim to that which he finds sublime while understanding fundamentally that possession is impossible and, clear-eyed, Abbey acknowledges that encroaching alteration of his beloved Arches is inevitable. Ironically, Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* contributed—then and now, the book is in its 14th printing—to inspiring the reported 1.5 million tourists currently visiting Arches each year. Thereby, Abbey's contradiction speaks to contemporary concerns toward balancing preservation and use, and his text questions the ways in which natural spaces continue to be altered for human consumption, concerns and questions that resonate well beyond what the writer called "Abbey's country."

Beyond Concern and Engagement to Biocentrism: Embracing Hybridity in Landscape in Ecocritical Theory and in the Writing of Wendell Berry

Regardless of where they fall on the narrative scale, each of these texts has a distinct commonality—their concern for and focus on hybrid landscapes. Terry Tempest Williams' *Bear River Bird Refuge* is an alternative representation of the hybrid in its human management of one of the world's most prominent bird flyways. Tyler's *Opportunity, Montana* and Crane's *Elwha Dam* are material embodiments of natural areas altered by human progress and development. Edward Abbey's *Arches* is, arguably, much like the hybrid landscape of *Rock Creek*—a managed area increasingly consumed through human activity and use.

Beyond the more generally-focused ecocritics described early in this chapter, another set of critical voices, including William Cronon's, engage explicitly with the concerns about hybrid landscape these contemporary realists advance. Through both directly and indirectly raising conceptual challenges that invite readers to discard binary thinking about such spaces—implicit in residual divisions of wilderness/civilization—these critics embrace a more integral and complicated view of the natural world. Cronon's essay "The Trouble With Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" argues that by conceptualizing wilderness as "pristine sanctuary" separate from "the contaminating taint of civilization" we create a distance between the two, contributing to our dismissal of the wilderness existing in our daily lives (69). The essay concludes with Cronon's call to rethink wilderness: "If wildness can stop being (just) out there and start being (also) in here...then perhaps we can get on with the unending task of struggling to live rightly in the world—not just in the garden, not just in the wilderness, but in the home that encompasses them both" (90). Richard White in his 2004 essay "From Wilderness to Hybrid Landscapes" contends that hybrid landscapes such as Nancy Langston's Malheur Bird Preserve

in *Where Land and Water Meet: A Western Landscape Transformed*, and Mark Fiege's Idaho in *Irrigated Eden* offer hope in the form of a "tangle of discourses" (558). Through the use of story and an emphasis on culture, White purports that a "cultural turn" has begun to reframe environmental history (559). Hybrid landscapes, suggests White, offer a space for discussing the intersection of "culture, class, and consumption" in relation to how nature continues to be defined and redefined (561). A deliberate focus on landscapes "neither conquered nor preserved," creates "far-reaching implications for how we understand, treat and manage the world we have helped create" (White 563).

However, the hybrid landscapes referenced by both Cronon and White can quickly become pluralistic, referencing areas as diverse as homeowner front lawns, urban pocket gardens, large irrigated tracts, industrial brown fields, and entire managed watersheds. This expansive definition can work to sanitize the actions leading to its referential landscape's current state. Among the possible consequences of this glossing is a halt to inquiry. To ignore the fact that wild areas exist in both qualitatively and quantitatively different states, ecocritics dismiss or at best whitewash cultural complexities involving residual ideology. Declaring a landscape hybrid can leave humans absolved of responsible stewardship of these altered areas.

The term "hybrid landscape" is in need of limits. Reduced to areas where both the needs of the natural and those of the human are allowed to thrive, the descriptor would be considered "biocentric" or earth centered. There is another set of ideas and texts offering a possible pathway toward such a definition, a conciliation of the problems associated with the hybrid's current pluralistic representation. A group of contemporary agrarians, led by Wendell Berry, suggest an earth-centered, biocentric value system toward environment, and in so doing, offer an ideology rooted in history and based on a symbiotic relationship between humans and the land. In the

introduction to *The Essential Agrarian Reader*, Norman Wirzba offers this ambitious declaration about agrarianism, claiming it "a comprehensive worldview that holds together in a synoptic vision the health of land and culture" (5). Continuing, Wirzba introduces the term "urban agrarianism" as a possible incorporation of "what is best from and what we know about urban and rural life" (6). This "urban agrarianism" says Wirzba, "cannot simply be about the preservation of farmland, but must include the care of all living spaces—residential neighborhoods, schools and playgrounds, parks, and landfills, as well as glaciers, forests, wetlands, and oceans—the protection of all the places that maintain life" (Wirzba 6). Urban agrarianism, then, is an acknowledgement that an ideological shift toward wilderness which considers definitions that are residual, dominant, and emergent, addressing landscapes both pristine and hybrid, requires a broader consideration of the entirety of what makes up the environment and the human element within it.

A perspective such as the one urban agrarianism puts forth does exist in one particular strain of contemporary writing about the environment, framed within the ethics of biocentrism. This "biocentric outlook", was defined in Paul Taylor's 1986 book *Respect for Nature* as a philosophical defense of humans as equal members of the earth's "community of life," interdependent on other species. Also core to the biocentric outlook and ethic is the idea that humans are not superior to other living things.

The nonfiction texts of Wendell Berry are a blend of natural history exposition and deeply personal narrative. The author's texts include numerous works of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, the latter with a focus on sustainable agriculture, strong communities, connection to place, Christian passivism, and the interconnectedness of all things. On the rhetorical scale of reportage versus ego-merging, Berry's texts encompass the aforementioned spectrum,

reverberating with the idea of interrelatedness between humans and the natural world. The merging of narrative approaches, at once romantic in its imagery and reverence while simultaneously rooted in historical evidence and pragmatism works to make Berry a writer who spans the literary scale as outlined in this study. Differing from Abbey's position in the middle of the scale, Berry offers an expansive alternative in his adherence to ideology predicated on the principle of deliberate engagement—represented in agricultural methods, rootedness and exploration of place, and respectful land use—of humans with their environment for the mutual benefit of both. An eighty-four-year-old author, activist, and fifth-generation farmer, Berry gave up a career teaching creative writing to ranch in Kentucky. In his 1982 essay "Getting Along With Nature," Berry states the problem with bifurcating the human and the natural:

We know, then, that the conflict between the human and the natural estates really exists and that it is to some extent necessary. But we are learning, or relearning, something else, too, that frightens us: namely, that this conflict often occurs at the expense of both estates. It is not possible but altogether probable that by diminishing nature we diminish ourselves, and vice versa. (162)

Berry's solution to this bifurcation and conflict is balance: "This sort of conflict, then, does not suggest the possibility of victory so much as it suggests the possibility of a compromise--some kind of peace, even an alliance, between the domestic and the wild. We know that such an alliance is necessary... 'In wildness is the preservation of the world,' as Thoreau said, may be a spiritual truth, but it is also a practical fact" (163).

Berry's environmental vision is nothing short of reverence toward the landscape. In his 2012 Jefferson Lecture delivered to the National Endowment for the Humanities, Berry makes a case for a new economy, something toward which he has argued previously and at length. Titled

"It All Turns on Affection," Berry's lecture defines his vision for economy: "I am nominating economy for an equal standing among the arts and humanities. I mean, not economics, but economy, the making of the human household upon the earth: the *arts* of adapting kindly the many human households to the earth's many ecosystems and human neighborhoods." Berry's lecture continues, invoking a case for imagination and affection as keys to this adaptation. Without imagining "their places in it" humans cannot "have a responsible relationship to the world." Requiring "contact" and "tangible connection" with a place and one's neighbors inspires sympathy, says Berry, which "enables affection." It is only within this affection, says Berry, that "we find the possibility of a neighborly, kind, and conserving economy."

Predicated on the biocentric idea that both the natural world and humans have intrinsic value, Berry defends his use of the word "affection," claiming the word itself connects to other "terms of value" and "worth" such as "love, care, sympathy, mercy, forbearance, respect, reverence." In directing affection toward the particular environment within which we each find ourselves, argues Berry, we are turning toward that which is "true, just, and beautiful."

Whatever their individual orientations on the spectrum of romantic to reportage-heavy, whether explicitly biocentric or not, all of these contemporary realist texts blend knowledge of natural history and personal narrative, and all represent their authors' attempts to probe, inquire, engage, and deeply consider what a more biocentric relationship with environment—beyond pristine, hybrid, urban, or rural—would look like. Often written as accounting for the landscape alterations occurring in the past and continuing to the present, these writers present an alternative to the romantic anthropocentric view of wilderness as simple escape and renewal. Routinely pointing back to the reader, these texts invite readers to consider their own values and assumptions related to environment. By calling into question the ways in which landscapes have

been historically defined, utilized, celebrated and marginalized, such works bear witness to a moment where the influence of history meets the challenges of a contemporary, sustainable relationship with what is wild, however one chooses to define it.

Returning to Rock Creek and the original inquiry of this dissertation regarding the ways in which Americans and westerners, in particular, have come to understand, define, and regard wilderness, my comparative rhetorical analysis yields a conclusion with deep historical roots: that texts from our country's inception to the present have a direct and tangible impact on the cultural values and attitudes humans associate with their environment.

As this dissertation has argued, its genesis dates back to the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and accounts of Lewis and Clark's 1804-1806 mythic journey, which opened the western landscape to settler's imagination and possibility. The agricultural opportunities which followed, the Homestead Act of 1862 and Carey Act of 1864, coupled with rhetorical assurances such as Charles Dana Wilber's tenet "Rain follows the plow" brought a migration of 400,000 homesteaders west to fulfill what became a normalized, pervading enthusiasm for continued expansion, predicated on the inherent belief that nature is a divine gift and the cultivator of soil a virtuous laborer.

A more complex rhetoric emerged between 1910-1935, outlined in Chapter Two, when these initial promises of frontier prosperity were tested against the harsh reality and work of homesteading. The four homesteaders included in this study—Elinor Pruitt Stewart, Agnes Morley Cleaveland, Mary Hallock-Foote, and Annie Pike Greenwood—each personally confront the natural landscape, predicated on consistent motifs of being called forth to do the destined work of civilizing the wild. These narratives provide a crucial connection between those of invitation west and early American nature writers, and in them can be seen aspects of

homesteader character—self-sufficiency, determinism, and reliability to name a few—beginning to shape a bifurcated ideology between healthy and unhealthy, desirable and undesirable, marginalized and valorized landscape that persists today.

The anthropocentric-romantic divide emerging during the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, which frames the content of Chapter Three, is the direct result of these earlier homesteaders' awareness and positioning. Closely associated with the work of developing and settling, the anthropocentric view focused on conquering and vanquishing wilderness while the view of the enlightened romantic saw wild nature simultaneously as awe-inspiring. With both views present in homesteader narratives, the latter evoked signs of transfiguration, a forging of natural and holy, a precursor to the sublime. Thomas Cole's artwork, along with literary work of the period—Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau—reveals a tension between civilized society and the solace found in the wild as a means of spiritual enlightenment. George Perkins Marsh's 1864 text *Man and Nature*, serves as an important embodiment of both the anthropocentric view and awareness of its environmental impact while simultaneously positioning man superior to his landscape. The groundwork of Marsh's text fed an ideology, led by the work of John Muir, the wilderness theologian and religious mystic largely responsible for initiating the preservationist movement. Muir's influence can be seen in Wallace Stegner's iconic "Wilderness Letter," written in 1960, which contributed greatly to The Wilderness Act of 1964, outlining the legal definition of wilderness. Stegner's letter is a crucial development toward understanding the contemporary ideology of man's bifurcation of the wilderness.

Bringing this rhetorical analysis to the present, a large body of contemporary nature writers actively continue to bifurcate and romanticize nature as a retreat destination. This well-

established, contemporary understanding toward wilderness use, particularly the marginalization of urban wild spaces or those considered hybrid is largely residual and predicated on historical use. Chapter Four's Montana case study, which includes writers Norman Maclean and Ivan Doig, couples spiritual transcendence and sacredness with romantic, mythic ideology surrounding the Montana landscape. Writers Cheryl Strayed and Gretel Ehrlich further complicate this romantic, ego-merging sense of nature by framing wilderness as space for personal grounding for improved mental and physical health. In Strayed and Ehrlich's work, nature serves as transformative tonic, with the self-interest of both writers at the center, a pervading view found in any contemporary bookstore's nature section.

Both of the established contemporary views of wilderness, the romantic, ego-merging and the biocentric outlined in Chapter Five, have real-world consequences for nature, in particular urban wild spaces such as Rock Creek, whose attraction for me initially inspired this dissertation. Although predisposed as Americans and westerners to vilify Rock Creek and its kin as working landscapes, unworthy to be defined as wild, while valorizing the sanctity of areas often considered pristine, such as Sun Valley's Silver Creek or the majestic Sawtooth Mountains, there are signs in contemporary writing about nature that this potentially destructive bifurcation is being challenged by an alternate perspective. Texts such as those of Wendell Berry which embody tenets of biocentric interconnectedness between humans and the environment are becoming more commonplace, alongside nature writing which invites discussion about how the past informs the current and future landscape of the west.

Taken together, both contemporary romantic texts and those more biocentric offer a composite of human culpability while encouraging us to reconsider rather than deny the value of hybrid spaces such as Rock Creek Canyon. To grow in our stewardship of such priceless “ordinary” places where the human and the natural intersect, though, this dissertation ultimately contends that it is essential that we become and remain aware of all the varied ways that texts past and present have shaped and continue to shape the core assumptions that we as Americans bring to the landscape which surrounds us.

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**Chapter 6: Pedagogical Essay-
A Hybrid Approach to Environmental Inquiry:
Engaging Students through Literature, Interdisciplinary Teaching, Narrative Scholarship,
and Place-based Curriculum**

Glen Love states, “Teaching and studying literature without reference to the natural conditions of the world and the basic ecological principles that underlie all life seems increasingly shortsighted, incongruous” (16). Those in the field of English and literature studies are particularly well positioned to teach a place-based curriculum designed around elements of literature and the environment as a means of inquiry regarding the ways in which texts have historically defined, utilized, celebrated, and marginalized landscape. As an English professor at the College of Southern Idaho—a two-year conservative institution serving a population where 85% of students are regional—I am well aware that such a curriculum poses a range of challenges and opportunities, and this chapter explores those issues while offering a redesign of a current course in this genre, focused and grounded extensively on the literature of nature writing while challenging contemporary definitions of wilderness.

Having taught a prior course titled “Science, Literature, and the Environment” at the College of Southern Idaho, I am familiar with the pedagogy of teaching environmental literature in an interdisciplinary, team-teaching environment with a biology instructor. However, my dissertation research, which encompassed a broad range of nature writing and texts related to pedagogy, including interdisciplinary teaching, cognitive science, and narrative theory, has revealed fresh opportunities for making substantive changes, thereby revising and enriching such a course.

Past iterations of this course saw biology professor Jan Simpkin and me pairing early American nature readings from writers including Christopher Columbus and Lewis and Clark

that voiced key themes relating to biology and the environment, such as Manifest Destiny and natural resource extraction, then progressing to ideas surrounding the “myth of the West” informed by selections from William Kittredge who challenges the mythical qualities of western beliefs regarding land use and ownership. All the while students were studying environmental ethics, as represented in Aldo Leopold's land ethic and the activist agenda of Rachel Carson who railed against the dangers of DDT. The course also integrated natural science through concepts such as the evolution of species with a particular focus on birds—a trip to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge following Terry Tempest Williams’ book *Refuge*.

Although the course framework was interdisciplinary and represented a progression that made sense to the instructors, the actual course never seemed to successfully integrate the literary and natural science components to my satisfaction and that of the biology professor, and frankly, it never felt like it had a distinct, unified purpose. Jan Simpkin, a PhD in Biology and Environmental Science and a seasoned teacher with two decades of experience at the College of Southern Idaho, began this course fifteen years ago with one of my fellow English professors, now retired. Largely following a curriculum based on Simpkin's environmental science course and attempting to integrate the literature around the core science concepts to satisfy the biology curriculum, the course lacked necessary literary grounding. As challenging as it is now to admit, I believe the course was constructed with an inherent belief in its goodness without a more informed and deliberate scaffolding and integration of concepts, both literary and environmental; the course also lacked a consideration for diversity of students and their learning styles.

Envisioning the revised course, "Wilderness Reconsidered: Literature and the Environment" requires not just a broadened focus on the literature of nature writing, but a more robust literary apparatus for students to examine the chosen course texts than the prior course. To

that end, Chapters Three, Four, and Five of my dissertation serve as reference for choosing specific texts with the intention of having students engage with a range of rhetorical material ranging from those heavily infused with romantic, ego-merging elements versus those which treat the environment as more of a central character. Providing students with opportunities for deliberate, focused practice with rhetorical literary analysis (for example, finding specific patterns in diction including metaphor, simile, symbolism, repetition, implied reader, narrator persona, biblical language, among others) with the intention of seeing how language plays a key role in identifying the author's intentions and thereby broadening student's appreciation and understanding of these texts will be a key revision to this course.

Course organization

The new course will be structured chronologically around the chosen literature. "Wilderness Reconsidered" will focus on North America and the literature of the United States and the American West more specifically, and the course will be structured into four units, the first spanning the literature of the early expansionist period of Manifest Destiny, 1803-1930, and the inspiring rhetoric of invitation to move west. The second unit sees students reading excerpts of early western homesteader narratives (1840-1935), and the third and fourth units focus on early American nature writing (1820-1911) and contemporary nature writing (1911-present) respectively. The rationale for structuring the course this way is based on the content of my dissertation and on the fact that it also offers a logical, historical progression for students, with the literature of the homesteader movement and early American nature writing texts overlapping. The involvement of CSI Biology professor Jan Simpkin and Kimberly Prestwich, a CSI professor of humanities, will be to provide an interdisciplinary component through guest lectures

during the semester as they relate to biological, environmental, cultural, and historical concepts relevant to each chronological unit, which I will outline in more detail below.

As with all interdisciplinary courses, this collaborative structure offers its own challenges which pedagogical literature has anticipated. Carolyn Haynes in her introduction to *Innovations in Interdisciplinary Teaching* asks, “How can faculty be better prepared for interdisciplinary teaching?” (xiv). In her pioneering work on interdisciplinary theory, Julie Thompson Klein offers some clues: “[I]nterdisciplinary work [moves] across the vertical plane of depth and the horizontal plane of breadth. Breadth connotes a comprehensive approach based in multiple variables and perspectives. Depth connotes competence in pertinent disciplinary, professional, and interdisciplinary approaches,” says Klein. In other words, an ambitious, revised course with a strong focus on literature like the one I’m proposing here would benefit from incorporating aspects of the other applicable fields (biology, environmental science, and history, in this case) and collaboration into contextual scaffolding, while drawing from the respective backgrounds and expertise of all the professors. Klein calls for a set of classroom conditions which lead students toward a deliberate synthesis of material acquired through “context” and “inquiry” (Haynes xiv). As imagined, “Wilderness Reconsidered” provides multiple opportunities for this context through guest lectures and discussions with professors providing expertise from biology and the humanities throughout the course in addition to making student inquiry a core tenet of the class, providing opportunities for students to explore and write about areas of personal interest and connection as they relate to course topics.

The Course's Aims and Texts

Incorporating a fundamental argument from my dissertation work, this course is designed to challenge simplistic definitions of wildness (including some to which students may initially subscribe) using a range of texts to study the ways in which writers have—and continue—to shape that definition. With a focus on place—Twin Falls and Southern Idaho specifically, and the Great Basin and the west more broadly—students are asked to use these texts to help identify their personal values surrounding the environment while simultaneously being asked to engage with the natural world. Along the way, they will gain in-depth practice in literary analysis, both of concepts and of style, will sample writing from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century, and will be exposed to relevant material from history and the sciences.

To that end as suggested above, “Wilderness Reconsidered” will draw on a broad rhetorical range of literary nature writing texts, both iconic and contemporary, that have come to represent the foundations of current environmental attitudes, and on background reading from the “interdisciplinary” disciplines that discuss ideas related to concepts of wild and natural. During the semester the course’s texts will introduce early American ideas of expansion and invitation, the homesteader experience, early American nature writers, and contemporary representations of both the romantic and a rhetorical range of realists. Unit One, with a focus on expansionist rhetoric, will see students engaging with excerpts of Bernard DeVoto's edited Lewis and Clark journals, which serve as an historical marker for the west's expansion. Equally important for students to understand about this period is the public perception of the Lewis and Clark journey, and Matthew Carey's 1806 account communicates the trip's prominence and provides context for the period. Excerpts from Charles Dana Wilber's 1881 text “The Great Valleys and Prairies of Nebraska and the Northwest” are crucial for understanding the yoking of

Manifest Destiny to the belief in divine geometric forces working in tandem. Wilber's tenet of "rain follows the plow" is an example of the flawed climatology available for examination and discussion in this unit, an opportunity for an additional biological component on ecology and climate from Simpkin. The words of politician William Gilpin and explorer Hall J. Kelley, both instrumental in Chapter One of my dissertation, help define the early American push westward as part of nation building, heavily influenced by the belief that expansion was God's plan. This section of the unit would be an example of where historical expertise from Prestwich regarding the artistic representation of the West would add additional cultural context to the material.

Homesteading texts will dominate the literature of Unit Two, with the primary texts represented by Elinore Pruitt Stewart and Annie Pike Greenwood, the former with an unflinching ebullience associated with each new western experience and the latter offering a more tempered view of the realities of homesteading, including death, disease, and failure. Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* is a text which clearly supports the idea that agrarian life and the work of the homesteaders was supported by a divine hand. Supplementing with John Wesley Powell's "Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States" offers an alternative vision of United States settlement based on the allocation of water, an example of a topic where Jan Simpkin can provide further insight through a guest lecture on water resources, connecting Powell's ideas to contemporary issues of allocation and contamination of water resources in the west and Twin Falls, specifically. Excerpts from Mark Fiege's *Irrigated Eden* with its specific focus on southern Idaho's Snake River valley provides context for how these ideas have historically altered and continue to shape the Magic Valley.

Unit Three is arguably the most complex of the course, as it introduces aspects of the sublime—a shifting natural aesthetic associated with awe—brought about by increased

industrialization and mechanized farming methods, new insights regarding biological origins, and a movement toward conservation and preservation. The primary texts will represent a period of paradox, when both nationalistic pride toward diminishing wild spaces and an increasing tendency toward viewing wilderness as a sublime place to escape for redemption, renewal, and spiritual transformation played a large part in public discourse. Excerpts from James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, George Perkins Marsh's *Man and Nature; or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*, and essays by John Muir serve as primary texts for the unit. A guest lecture from Prestwich addressing the artwork of this period with a focus on the work of painters from the Hudson River School—Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, and Thomas Moran—will help convey to students the broad, mythical ideology which informed the sensibilities and aesthetics during this time, working to influence and shape views of wilderness and landscape then and now.

Moving into contemporary texts, Unit Four will draw on primary texts which represent the ways in which preservation of pristine wilderness is encouraged and valorized while urban and hybridized wild areas are simultaneously marginalized—the theme that, in a personal sense, sparked this dissertation for me, as its introduction notes. Texts focusing on the transformational, romantic qualities of nature include excerpts from Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*, Ivan Doig's *This House of Sky*, Cheryl Strayed's *Wild*, and Gretel Ehrlich's *The Solace of Open Spaces* provide a foundation for students to parse the rhetorical devices at work which continue to shape how wilderness is understood, defined, and treated. Supplementing with Marxist theorist Raymond Williams' essay "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent" provides important context for helping students understand the ways in which contemporary attitudes and ideologies

are shaped by historical factors and how these factors are dynamic and continually adapting to shape attitudes and definitions of wilderness.

The second set of texts within Unit Four provides a contrast for students to the texts listed above, providing them exposure to other contemporary perspectives beyond the romantic, ego-merging view of wilderness: namely, the realism of those leaning more toward reportage, and those falling somewhere in-between. The primary texts for this part of the unit will include excerpts from Terry Tempest Williams' *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, Brad Tyer's *Opportunity, Montana: Big Copper, Bad Water, and the Burial of an American Landscape*, Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*, and several essays by Wendell Berry, including "Solving for Pattern" and "The Unsettling of America."

Supplementing the foundational literary work throughout the semester will be a selection of ecocritical texts, including essays from William Cronon such as "The Trouble With Nature," Cheryll Glotfelty's excellent introduction to ecocriticism in the original ecocritical reader she helped edit, several essays by Scott Russell Sanders including "A Conservationist Manifesto" and selections from his collection *Earth Works* and Scott Slovic, whose approachable rhetorical style and commitment to critical thinking about the environment are good choices for student inquiry, particularly regarding the concept of hybrid spaces. Slovic, in particular, has written several essays regarding the importance of narrative theory and has worked to make narrative itself an important aspect in environmental studies. The ecocritical texts also provide opportunities for students to explore concepts of biodiversity and habitat loss, evolution, sustainability, climate change, and population growth via guest lectures.

The Course's Reflective (Reconsideration) Component for Students

In further contrast to the previous course, "Wilderness Reconsidered" will provide opportunities for students to grow in ways beyond the merely academic as it invites them to reconsider their pre-existing attitudes toward the natural world, particularly toward "wilderness" and hybrid spaces. The landscape of Southern Idaho and the rapidly changing conditions of Twin Falls, specifically, offer an ideal test case for such inquiry. In a landscape encompassing just 6,000 square miles in the region around CSI, including the Sawtooth Mountains, the pristine fly fishing waters of Silver Creek, and The Snake River, and one of the most environmentally compromised major waterways in the United States, students have a unique opportunity to examine aspects of history, natural science, literature, and values regarding the landscapes they believe deserve preservation and those they tend to dismiss, themes found in the chapter five texts of this dissertation.

To this end, before beginning its chronological structure, the new course will commence with an exploration of baseline student values associated with wilderness. "Wilderness Reconsidered" will begin with an assessment of where students position themselves within the natural world with the intention of building awareness toward areas often dismissed because they do not fall into a personal inventory of what they consider "nature." Through a first-week questionnaire which asks students to connect directly to personal history and experience with environment, the assessment will gauge student attitudes and personal histories of wilderness use—hunters, fishers, recreationists, homebodies, each with a discrete perspective on environment and place. The purpose of the assessment is to make students aware of the personal ideologies they currently carry about the natural world, and to begin the process of suggesting that many perspectives are possible.

As students begin examining their preconceived attitudes and definitions regarding wilderness, ideas related to hybrid landscapes can be introduced. In *Writing for an Endangered World* Lawrence Buell offers this observation regarding the challenges represented in the prescribed boundaries associated with the genre of traditional nature writing and in so doing, Buell addresses the importance of engaging students with a curriculum that deliberately engages with the hybrid landscape:

Literature and environment studies must reckon more fully with the interdependence between urban and outback landscapes, and the traditions of imaging them, if they are to become something more than a transient fashion. Although their reach in principle extends to any literary transaction between human imagination and material world, in practice they have concentrated ...on 'natural' environment rather than environment more inclusively, and taken as their special province outdoor genres like nature writing, pastoral poetry, and wilderness romance ... No treatment of environmental imagination can claim to be comprehensive without taking account of the full range of historic landscapes, landscape genres, and environmental(ist) discourses. (8)

Buell's observations on how we define and thereby "see" the landscape which surrounds us represent an important tenet for this course at CSI in particular, for our campus is surrounded by a hybrid landscape that does not necessarily lend itself to romantic stereotypes of wilderness.

Rock Creek is not the only living example of a hybrid landscape—a landscape with both natural and man-made elements—with which most of them will be familiar, for Twin Falls County more broadly embodies elements of the hybrid in a desert landscape transformed for agricultural purposes. Irrigated for farming since 1884 when Ira Burton "Bert" Perrine first

arrived from Indiana, the entire Southern Idaho desert plateau, including elements within the city limits of Twin Falls, has now been converted to a farming mecca. Tapping underground aquifers, farmers and ranchers bring water to the surface, and the "magic" of the Magic Valley makes the greening of the desert possible.

Perrine's early vision has expanded to an area which now represents one of the world's highest concentrations of industrialized agriculture, with the Snake River currently converting a staggering 6.5 million acres from grassland to cropland. According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture and the Idaho Department of Commerce, 87 percent of the counties through which The Snake River flows now have land used for agriculture, either cropland or grazing. Richard Manning in a 2014 issue of *High Country News* reports the tripling of dairy cows in Idaho since 1993 to the reported current 580,000 head represented by the United Dairymen of Idaho, putting the state just behind New York and just ahead of Pennsylvania.

This landscape—with which 85% of CSI students are familiar before they come to college, whether through a family history of bovine ranching, traditional farming, dairy ranching, or simply living in an area where 296 dairies dot the immediate surrounding landscape—brings an unique opportunity to begin classroom inquiry exploring ideas related to nature, western history, and what students consider "wild" or "wilderness." Within this inquiry, an exploration of the word "hybrid"—particularly as it relates to the Southern Idaho landscape, more specific areas such as Rock Creek, and more broadly across the west—will ground the course. Further opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching, the freedom to select a range of texts that are representative of a broad spectrum of nature writing, ecology, and history, and funding for several field trips within and outside the community are viable options for facilitating such a course serving a range of student interests, backgrounds, and learning styles.

Supplemental Activities

Over the course of the semester, several field trips will allow for opportunities to explore the landscapes of The Bear River Bird Refuge outside Salt Lake City, Utah, and/or Yellowstone National Park, providing students the chance to observe areas set aside as canonically-defined and preserved “wilderness.” These field trips, in addition to offering opportunities for immersion, will also play key roles as reference points and discussion tools for written assignments throughout the course. Combined with a discussion-oriented classroom setting which draws from the Socratic method, students will, over the course of the semester, be responsible for leading discussions on specific readings via a sign-up method.

These and other field trips present a context for exploring the definition of hybrid landscape—a broad term—as it extends to managed watersheds and national parks as well as to irrigated areas permeating the Southern Idaho landscape. A series of field trips to Rock Creek Canyon—an area encapsulated within Twin Falls County with areas within the city limits accessible for a class period—allows students to observe how this watershed alters as it progresses from its headwaters to agricultural and recreational areas, then through the city. The Rock Creek field trips also provide a tangible example of the urban/rural interface and how a landscape which is arguably pristine is altered by human use in a variety of forms—recreational, agricultural, and industrial, before connecting to an even larger body of water, the Snake River. Other day field trip opportunities include a visit to the Nature Conservancy's Silver Creek—an hour's drive away—offering a vastly different hybrid landscape in response to the ways in which a community defines, values, and treats a particular waterway—in the case of Silver Creek, a celebrated and protected fishing area. Other local field trips include a visit to the Twin Falls wastewater treatment plant and CSI's fish hatchery, both providing key components of hybrid

landscapes. With the exception of the field trips to Yellowstone, Bear River, and Silver Creek, all aforementioned field trips could be completed during a course period, with Bear River and Silver Creek accessible as Saturday day trips and Yellowstone the outlying trip requiring hotel reservations. Making these field trips mandatory would be a challenge with student's work schedules; however, having them choose at least one trip out of the three seems manageable, and previous iterations of this course have seen one required field trip work well with the course schedule and student's other outside obligations.

Written assignments

A. Narrative Scholarship

A key component of the course will involve what professor of ecocriticism Scott Slovic calls “narrative scholarship.” Introduced as a term in Slovic’s short essay “Ecocriticism: Storytelling, Values, Communication, Contact,” narrative scholarship refers to what Slovic sees as an “intermittent strategy for literary analysis”—an approach appropriate for undergraduates beginning to learn and incorporate analysis tools—where the purpose is to “illuminate and appreciate the context of reading—that is, to embrace the literary text as language that somehow contributes to our lives ‘out in the world’” (13). Slovic believes ecocritics and students of the environment, when engaging in literary analysis at any level, should attempt to explain nature writing through personal storytelling that is rooted in place—in other words, the students' own experiences with the natural world:

We must not reduce our scholarship to an arid, hyperintellectual game, devoid of smells and tastes, devoid of actual experience. Encounter the world and literature together, then report about the conjunctions, the intersecting patterns. Analyze

and explain literature through storytelling--or tell your own stories and then, subsequently, show how contact with the world shapes your responses to texts.

(13)

To that end, the literary texts used in "Wilderness Reconsidered" will first provide students with examples of such storytelling. Excerpted texts from Ian Marshall's *Story Line: Exploring the Literature of the Appalachian Trail* John Elder's *Reading the Mountains of Home* and Terry Tempest Williams' *Refuge* and *The Hour of Land* offer strong examples of writers conducting geographical research in a specific location (or in Marshall's case, the geographical region spanning the length of a specific trail) and will be assigned for student reading, classroom discussion, and literary analysis.

As students read such examples of narrative scholarship—armed with tools for rhetorically analyzing them—they will also have several guest lectures by Simpkin addressing the historical ecology and geology of the region, aspects that have literally shaped the Southern Idaho region, some examples of these lecture/presentation topics include The Bonneville Flood, agriculture and ranching and their progression in the region, and irrigation and the local aquifer, for example. The aforementioned field trips will also become occasions where students are assigned to compose narrative scholarship (personal storytelling, combined with course information as it relates to a particular area or aspect) of their own in a series of creative nonfiction drafts (approximately 2,000-4,000 words total) that they will share in peer groups and whole-class sessions, then revise and submit for a grade as one of the semester's major assignments.

B. Journal as Further Exploration

Because one of the working goals of this course is to question and deepen students' sense of connection to ecological place, students will also be assigned out-of-class-hour encounters with the natural world. Using an idea from Colin Irvine, author of "Cognitive Phenology: An Evolving Approach to the Challenges of Teaching Environmental Literature," the course extends the group practice in narrative scholarship by requiring students to keep a journal outside of class for the purpose of recording and evaluating personal responses to course readings as they relate to specifically assigned "challenges." Irvine's various challenges for his classes—several non-negotiable, the majority optional—include "Becoming a Budding Phenologist (Pun Intended)" (167). Irvine's students are instructed to select a plot of land they can visit two or three times a week—"it can be on campus, near the river, near home, wherever, as long as it's outside" (167). Other challenges from Irvine's courses include learning about the birds and trees of the area, spending 24 uninterrupted hours in the outdoors, going "off-grid," away from technology, and an option to create a challenge of their own (167-168). This connection to a chosen, specific place has students recording their observations and reflections, creating a blog or using photographs—any way they are connecting and recording their experience with that place, providing a range of possible responses depending on students' predispositions toward the creative or analytical.

My version of this in a course which emphasizes literature would, in addition to students recording their own responses as Irving's do, add the requirement that each journal entry explicitly reference at least one course reading as it connects, relates, and informs student's ongoing experiences and experiments. Providing options for these challenges encourages course ownership and provides another opportunity to explore preferential differences and learning styles. Thinking about the challenge requirements and writing about the process of thinking is

part of getting students to deliberately observe their personal values and ideology. In past course iterations of this course, students were asked to keep a journal solely during field trips, and providing additional opportunities for students to think and write about their experiences within various representations of the natural world is an attempt to question and broaden the ways in which students define and value these spaces.

Such linkage of first-hand experience and reflective writing is hardly a radical new idea in the classroom, of course. In terms on the specific subject matter of the course I'm proposing, for example, one especially notable precedent is offered by ecocritic John Tallmadge, who advocates in an essay titled "Toward a Natural History of Reading" for combining natural history with what he calls "field work"—a tangible encounter with the landscape under study. The aforementioned journal for this course will serve as an ongoing, personal representation of my students' connection to environment, scholarship, and response, and I plan to collect it several times throughout the semester. Tallmadge asserts that rigorous, disciplined study to attain what he calls "discursive knowledge"—the information we obtain from focused intentional reading, not limited to other literary works, but "of all relevant criticism, theory, biography, and scholarship in allied disciplines"—is necessary when examining a text ecocritically, and only when this knowledge is combined with engagement, which Tallmadge defines as "the deliberate and systematic study of the referential world through direct encounter" can ecocriticism truly flourish (287). Tallmadge's essay "Toward a Natural History of Reading" will be assigned for its thoughtful representation and argument for meaningful engagement with environment. For students, Tallmadge's insistence on the rigor of obtaining discursive knowledge (conducted through research of their choosing) combined with deliberate and frequent forays into the landscape are fundamental aspects of the course.

C. More Formal Assignments

In addition to the ongoing course journal, students will be asked to submit two short response papers—between 2-3 pages each—asking them to more formally respond to aspects of the reading by demonstrating their ability to connect aspects of environmental history, literature, and natural science—ideally, these responses will build on material from students' journal writing. These assignments will also ask students to demonstrate use of the tools they have learned for literary analysis.

A longer researched argument paper will serve as a final project with students conducting research on one aspect of the local environment that interests them, gathering information and texts related to it such as opinion/editorial pieces, letters to the editor, and broader, more in-depth reportage pieces, all while fact-checking and assessing tone, audience, and rhetorical strategies which address romantic, ego-merging elements studied versus textual elements which make nature more of a central character. I will encourage student topics to be driven by interest, ranging from the specifically local to more regional or statewide issues, with students declaring their topic/problem only after engaging for several weeks with research material. Examples of student topics range from the prevalence of dairies and their effect on the local aquifer, public access to public lands versus private ownership, and sustainable agricultural practices to name a few. Providing students with an opportunity to share their research projects is an integral aspect of this assignment, and as a secondary component, I will borrow a page from Laura Barbas-Rhoden, who encourages teachers of what she calls "green humanities" to connect students globally (126). Within their final presentation, students will be asked to connect some aspect of their study to a national or global environmental set of conditions and, if possible, connect with that particular area electronically to share information. Additionally, students will be required to

utilize literary texts from the course as they relate to their topics, incorporating at least three texts that are relevant to their purpose, providing an additional opportunity to incorporate analysis.

D. Tests

In addition to the aforementioned activities and assignments, students will be asked to take several quizzes and a final exam at the conclusion of the course. The quizzes will cover the tools of rhetorical analysis as well as asking students to make connections among the aspects of biological and humanities guest presentations and how they relate to the literary texts in the course. The final exam will ask students to make associations on a broader scale through identification of key course texts and concepts and the ways in which they combine to complicate and/or broaden their current definition of wilderness. Part of the final exam will see students revisiting their initial personal assessment questionnaire—that I have saved and handed back to them—as part of their own reflection process.

I am eager to teach this new course "Wilderness Reconsidered," with its focus on literature supplemented with interdisciplinary components of biology and humanities. With guest lectures providing background contexts, and students' engagement through narrative scholarship, first-hand experience, and explicit interrogation of their own and others' values, the course represents an improvement from its predecessor. Though "Science, Literature, and the Environment" was a fulfilling course to teach, the completion of this dissertation has enabled me to identify and address challenges my co-teacher and I encountered, and "Wilderness Reconsidered" takes much fuller advantage of CSI's location in Twin Falls and Southern Idaho, themselves hybrid landscapes, thus potentially seeming more directly relevant to students. While opening their eyes to the variety of literary perspectives on the environment and the variety of

attitudes that they and their classmates hold, along with providing crucial background in environmental studies and requiring that they themselves become practitioners of various ways of writing about nature, it ultimately invites them to embrace both a sense of place and their own agency within it.

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