

**ECOCRITICISM AND SOUTHWESTERN WRITERS: AN EXAMINATION FROM  
PAST TO FUTURE**

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## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to my father, David R. Miller, who always believes in me, and to my mother, Ellen R. Miller, who inspires me. And finally, to my boyfriend, Robert Benjamin Lee, who has loved me and fed me warm food through two master's.

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## INTRODUCTION

If one picks up a book on ecocriticism today, he or she is likely to find a lengthy introduction defining the field. There are many reasons for this approach. The most obvious one is that ecocriticism still lacks a clear definition. Many critics cite the fact that, unlike other literary/political movements, ecocriticism did not, as Ursula K. Heise says, “evolve gradually as the academic wing of an influential political movement” (506). Despite its origination in 1978 by William Rueckert in an essay entitled “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism,” the term *ecocriticism* did not gain currency until Cheryll Glotfelty suggested all ecologically informed literary criticism be referred to as ecocriticism (Murfin and Ray 125). The term has gained popularity, and ecocriticism, as the emphasis on global warming and human impact on the environment came more sharply into focus in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, continued to grow. Ecocriticism gained momentum in the 1990s with the creation of ASLE (Association for Studies of Literature and the Environment), founded by Scott Slovic and others, and the inclusion of an ecocriticism session at the annual MLA (Modern Language Association) convention. Ecocriticism has also received some acclaim for possibly reviving the field of literary scholarship. Critics, however, are quick to point out the “ancient roots” from which ecocriticism stems. Books and articles on ecocriticism rarely fail to mention in their introductions certain prominent authors, books, and time periods that contributed to the

examination of human interaction with the natural environment previous to ecocriticism's establishment as a legitimate field of study in literary scholarship. Thoreau's *Walden* and the essays, fiction, and poetry of the British and American Romantics, must be acknowledged as early literary works that ecocritics often analyzed. Without acknowledgment of these authors, an ecocritical discussion remains only partial. Having said that, this thesis is partial, in the sense that it examines mostly American texts, particularly Southwestern, and utilizes American scholars, despite ecocritics push to "go global." Speaking from a Western perspective, authors like Thoreau built the foundation of early ecocriticism. Although the term *ecocriticism* was not coined until 1978, these authors devoted much of their writing to nature and the human relationship with nature. These works may be regarded as early examples of the "first-wave" of environmental studies. According to Lawrence Buell's book, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*, 2005 the terms *first-wave* and *second-wave*, or *revisionist*, ecocriticism should be applied loosely. Some of the most prominent differences, highlighted throughout Buell's book, are that first-wave ecocriticism focuses on preservation of nature and tends to regard "environment" solely as the natural environment. Second-wave ecocriticism is not so narrowly focused. It recognizes that by focusing solely on the natural environment and preservation ecocriticism is hurting itself. Second-wave ecocriticism also claims to take "urban and degraded landscapes just as seriously as 'natural landscapes'"(22).

In order to discuss ecocriticism, the discourse must be established in the context of the thoughts and studies of these authors. This thesis will attempt to sustain this context for discussion.

Drawing from the definitions examined in the introduction, the first chapter will use Lawrence Buell's most recent book, to discuss some of the discourses developing in ecocriticism. Buell discusses first and second-wave ecocritics and nature writers, while emphasizing that the two "waves" overlap rather than draw definitive lines. Buell's definition raises some important questions, particularly when it explains how the green movement within literary works and cultural studies can best be perceived as a second, revisionist, wave pushing away from pastoral ideals of the first-wave. This insight is particularly noteworthy because it helps the modern reader understand the different discourses being explored by critics and nature writers in the "second wave," such as *ecofeminism* and *environmental justice*. This chapter will also briefly discuss the discourses of ecofeminism and environmental justice in order to not only examine possible future directions of ecocriticism but also to build a framework for an ecocritical analysis of Terry Tempest Williams's memoir, *Refuge*, in chapter three.

The second chapter, drawing from Chapter One, will demonstrate how the autobiographical book, *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey sets forth many of the ideals of first-wave nature writers, as defined by Lawrence Buell. In *Desert Solitaire*, the narrator separates himself from culture by living and working at Arches National Park. Abbey's persona in *Desert Solitaire* denounces anthropocentrism and society, which, according to Buell, is characteristic of first-wave nature writers. However, Abbey's postmodern theories are representative of revisionist ideals, and they not only underscore Buell's point that the terms *first-wave* and *revisionist* should be applied loosely, but also illustrate how, during the 1960s and 70s, America's landscape and identity drastically changed.

Chapter Three will focus on Terry Tempest Williams's remembrance of her mother's death in her narrative, *Refuge*. Williams's book lends itself easily to many of the second-wave discourses developing in ecocriticism. The story is narrated in both the city and the bird sanctuary where she goes to find peace. Many of the second-wave critics and nature writers today would like to see the inclusion of all environments in ecocritical readings. They also reject the possibility of removing oneself from culture, which Abbey and nature writers all the way back to Thoreau yearned to do. Many second-wave critics and writers posit that writers like Abbey and Thoreau augment the myth that one can cut all cultural ties, when, in fact, these men lived in parks or structures developed and conceived by humans. In Williams's book the narrator moves between nature and culture and draws parallels and connections between the two. Her book also lends itself easily to an ecofeminist and environmental justice reading. The land is feminized, and the women in the narrative play the central role. Williams's family members are victims of nuclear fallout, which lends the book a consideration of environmental justice.

While the majority of Chapters One and Two will use Buell's book, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, as framework, I will also incorporate the ideas and theories of Scott Slovic, Krista Comer, Leo Marx, Glenn A. Love, Don Scheese, Jeffrey Myers, Ursula K. Heise, Michael P. Cohen, Stephanie Saver, David Robertson, Mark C. Long, Mark Mossman, and Bonnie Foote.

In my conclusion I would like to examine the indirect focus of each of the chapters of this thesis, which involves a consideration of the future of ecocriticism. I address a question that many of the discourses presented herein aim to answer,

specifically ecocriticism's move away from pastoral ideology. Ecocriticism's transition away from pastoral ideology raises the questions: what should be the focus of the discipline? What environments and texts should be included in ecocriticism? Over the past years ecocritics have begun to broaden their critical lens to incorporate works outside of nature writing. As the population continues to increase and technology advances, people spend less and less time in the natural environment. As a result the definition of "environment" in ecocriticism is expanding beyond nature writing and non-fiction prose concerning nature. In the recent course of ecocriticism's evolution it has sought to identify itself with the more denotative definition of environment: any place or space. In the conclusion, I would like to examine some of the work already done in this area and suggest other possibilities.

Given these trends, I will focus on genres other than nonfiction nature writing such as fiction of the American Southwest and ecocritics' commentary on these novels. A novel such as *All the Pretty Horses* offers insight into a time when the loss of open space in the West turned into commercial fossilization of the West. It is a testimony of the characters' mournful relationship to the disappearing land and a demonstration of how "progress" is parallel with the loss of natural environments. The term *progress* is a term that Buell describes as being one of those "metaphors that have come to seem deceptively transparent through long usage" (*Environmental Imagination* 3). Since the nineteenth century Americans have come to "equate [progress] with 'improvement,' first with political liberalization and then with technological development" (Buell, *Environmental Imagination* 3). In the novel *All the Pretty Horses*, "progress" is associated with technological development. A general feeling of *ubi sunt*, nostalgia for

the past, pervades the novel as a result of the “progress” occurring in the West. The conclusion’s brief ecocritical analysis of *All the Pretty Horses* attempts to provide an example of ecocriticism’s goal to continue to integrate more and more analyses of texts outside the genre of nonfiction nature writing. Another example of possible texts outside the realm of nature writing is Katherine Anne Porter’s collection of short stories in *The Old Order*. Using Terrell Dixon’s essay on Katherine Anne Porter in *From Texas to the World and Back* as an introduction, I will discuss Porter’s short stories in a manner akin to the neo-ecocriticism. Short stories such as “The Grave” provide fertile ground for ecocritical reading. In addition, I will mention other texts that provide fertile ground for ecocritical reading. Inclusion and scrutiny of new texts and environments will allow ecocriticism to adapt to modern conditions.

## CHAPTER I

### AMERICAN IDENTITY AND ECOCRITICISM

Ecocriticism's distinction from other critical theories is most apparent when one examines its history because it is both a theory that has recently emerged and a theory built upon many old ideas. Because of this paradox, a brief history of American environmental writings and philosophy is essential to an understanding of ecocriticism. Ecocritical theory derives from atypical sources of literary theory, partly as a result of its past and partially as a result of what it hopes to accomplish. According to Buell, "In one form or another 'the idea of nature' has been a dominant or at least residual concern for literary scholars and intellectual historians ever since these fields came into being" (*Future 2*). Because that "form" has often been in narrative texts, "literature-and-environment studies have striven almost from the start to define their position on the critical map analytically as well as through narrative practice" (Buell, *Future 9*) This is partly because it is similar to feminism studies, but unlike feminism one cannot speak as the environment. For this reason, narrative texts, in which writers attempt to immerse themselves into nature, has held and will continue to hold an important position in ecocriticism. As Buell says, "At most we can attempt to speak from the standpoint

of understanding humans to be a part of what Aldo Leopold called ‘the biotic community’” (*Future* 8). This desire to be part of the biotic community is why many nonfiction narrative writing texts are created, and nonfiction nature writing authors’ like Thoreau’s, experiences and philosophizing are an integral part of ecocriticism.

Without a brief discussion concerning ecocritics’ theoretical methods, it is difficult to understand why this thesis differentiates very little between the theory in ecocritical essays and those in nature narrative texts. Similar to many ecocritical texts this thesis discusses the development patterns of environmentalist philosophy in the United States that are revealed in both critical theory and nature writing texts. Lawrence Buell addresses ecocriticism’s position as a theory and movement that has created an alliance among critics, writers, and environmental activists. In the first pages of his book *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Buell discusses the distinctly strong alliance between critics, writer-practitioners, and environmental activists in the ecocritical field. He cites journals, such as *ISLE (International Studies in Literature and the Environment)*, that support and encourage ecocriticism’s efforts to forge a new approach in literary theory through their broad range of scholarly, pedagogical, creative, and environmental contributions. While this alliance has in the past “fed mainstream academic critics’ suspicions that ecocriticism was more an amateur enthusiasm than a legitimate new ‘field,’” it has also urged others to champion ecocriticism as a new academic field precisely because it lacks “the metropolitan tendency in literary studies toward high theory and abstraction” (*Future* 6). Many ecocritics feel that high theory and abstraction have little place in ecocriticism because their inclusion contradicts the fundamental

purpose of ecocriticism to remain grounded in the physical world, not the mind. As Buell explains:

[I]f your ultimate interest is the remediation of humankind's alienation from the natural world, you may well decide on principle to resist the abstractifications of theoretical analysis, indeed to resist standard modes of formal argument altogether in favor of a discourse where critical reflection is embedded within narratives of encounter with nature. (*Future 8*)

The practice of embedding critical reflection within narratives is a practice that rests on principle and tradition. Ecocriticism has only recently been recognized as a literary theory, but environmental philosophy has a long history in the United States, particularly in nature writers' texts. Ecocritics found that one of their first tasks was to synthesize and evaluate the theories presented in these narratives and other texts. It is also, as Buell states, the principle of resisting theoretical analysis that delves too far into the mind and away from the physical. For many ecocritics combining philosophy in a narrative in which the narrator is close to nature is the preferred theoretical method. The renowned ecocritic Scott Slovic has termed such narratives "narrative scholarship" (*Future 9*). As a result of some ecocritics' unorthodox method of theorizing, the chapters of this thesis weave between critical theories found in both critical and narrative texts of the United States.

As ecocriticism developed in the United States, two relatively distinct phases emerged, but each should be understood to have overlapping theories. Both of these phases have roots in the pastoral ideal that has long contributed to America's identity. The first phase can be traced back to European's perception of the discovery of America

as an occasion to “withdraw from the great world and begin a new life in a fresh, green landscape” (Marx 3). America was a land that Europeans viewed as a vast source of natural goods, despite the presence of Indians. Much of America’s identity as a “land of opportunity” stemmed from the vast amounts of unsettled space that inspired people from all over the world to venture far from home and take their chance at wresting a portion of the land from those already occupying it. Often cited in ecocritical essays and texts is Leo Marx’s influential 1964 book, *The Machine in the Garden*. The first sentence reads, “The pastoral ideal has been used to define the meaning of America ever since the age of discovery, and it has not yet lost its hold upon the native imagination” (3). The first-wave of environmental studies is often associated with the pastoral identity of America and its celebratory approach towards nature. Often when people hear the term pastoral, they think first of the Greeks herding sheep in green pastures, but, as Terry Gifford explains, pastoral, today, is a term used broadly (Gifford 1).

The first use of the term *pastoral* Gifford describes is the use that often comes to mind when people hear the word: the way the Greeks and Romans used it in poetry. A later, second usage Gifford discusses is the use of the term *pastoral* to describe any “literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban” (2). In both senses, there is a celebratory attitude towards nature (Gifford 2). According to Gifford, in a third use of *the term*, the celebration of nature comes under critique:

Here [in the third use of the word pastoral] the difference between the literary representation of nature and the material reality would be judged to be intolerable by the criteria of ecological concern. A farm worker might say that a novel was a pastoral if it celebrated a landscape as though no-one actually sweated to maintain

it on a low income. In this case the difference between the textual evidence and the economic reality would be judged to be too great by the criteria of social reality. (2)

This third use of *pastoral* illustrates contemporary ecocriticism and environmental studies' desire to disassociate itself with the idealism that disregards the farm worker who toils the land on a low income. In such cases the gap between the word and the world is too large to be overlooked. Much first-wave environmental literature idealized life in the country, and writers would make brief jaunts out in the country "playing" farmer, just to return a month later to societal comforts. In his seminal essay "Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism," Glen A. Love argues for a redefinition of American pastoralism. America has a long tradition of pastoral writing that corresponds with what has often been referred to as "deep ecology." Deep ecology values wilderness and rural landscapes and plays an important role in the early phases of ecocriticism. The philosophy of deep ecology resonated with many nature writers, like Thoreau and Edward Abbey (Heise, "Hitchhiker," 507). Ecocritics often posit that environmental studies began with authors like Thoreau who criticized society and sought a safe haven from it, but they remained in the haven only temporarily and ignored the poverty and work that often corresponded with living in the country. In early pastoral writing many binaries are established (see chart <sup>1</sup>).

Early nature writers were applauded for seeking places of isolation well away from society and human intercourse. Bennett says, "[T]he presiding spirit of this first-wave of ecocriticism was the theory known as deep ecology with its 'radical critique of anthropocentrism'" (208). In such texts, an author's desire to avoid

anthropocentrism resonates with ecocritics today who want to avoid theories that are “human” centered in their concern with the mind. But ecocritics today simultaneously feel that by going to the extremes many first-wave critics did to avoid anthropocentrism, they created a world that celebrated the absence of humans and became an idealized abstract world. First-wave writers embarked on journeys away from civilization and entered a world where they could perform their philosophical musings, but these writers always re-immersed themselves back into civilization.

The brevity of their encounters with nature underscored literary theory’s distance from the real world; for example, those who worked the land for a living and did not have the luxury of sitting beneath a shady tree and musing over humanity’s connection with nature. With such a concentration on the question of the mind, the purpose of their brief biocentric lifestyle echoed of anthropocentrism. The purpose of the journey became an exercise of the mind, and the ability to perform higher-order thinking is a human characteristic. Regardless how these writers tried to remove themselves from their anthropocentric tendencies, they physically could not. They sought an unconscious existence rather than a self-conscious existence, but it did not work. In fact, it can easily be argued that the farmer who toils the soil is closer to an unconscious existence, because, unlike the authors of these early nature writings, farmers usually do not enter nature to think, self-consciously, about their relationship to it and how they fit into the order of the natural world.

As a result of the heightened awareness that nature writers often discuss in their narratives, ecocritics today feel that humanity’s anthropocentrism is unavoidable. Revisionist ecocritics believe it does more good to accept, explore, and encourage

anthropocentrism as method of developing new frameworks for discussing and analyzing nature in texts. However, the acceptance of anthropocentrism in ecocriticism is tempered with the fact that ecocriticism's focus is usually to ensure nature, not humans, is the focal point of analysis while still encouraging diversity in subject content: for example, examining the relationship between people and nature or nature in urban environments, but not necessarily one or the other.

Ecocriticism today, often referred to as revisionist ecocriticism, was formally developed in the 1990s but has its roots in the environmental literature, criticism, and advocacy that came before it. Ecocriticism in the 1990s is unique because it provided a holism to environmental studies that had not existed before. As their first task, revisionist ecocritics researched and synthesized previous literature-and-environment studies that existed before the 1990s but as isolated "fields" of study by individuals. In 1996 Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm put together the first significant collection of ecocritical essays for scholars, professionals, and all those interested in the field. In the introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Glotfelty writes, "The list of periodicals and professional organizations [at the end of the book] . . . will show the lone scholar who howls in the wilderness how to become a growing community of scholars active in ecological literary studies" (xxxii). *The Ecocriticism Reader* provides lists and professional organizations for the lone scholar, but more significantly, it was one of the first books to provide a reference that served as both an introduction to the field and a source book from which scholars in the 1990s and before, whose interest in the field had long been tempered by the lack of unity, could use to initiate purposeful, directed ecocritical discussion. The text illustrates the desire beginning in the 1980s and burgeoning in the 1990s to build upon

environmental texts, such as the ideas of Thoreau, of the past and transform the ideas of environment in America into action. It seems revisionist ecocriticism picked up where William Ruckert left off when he ended his essay, "Literature and Ecology," in 1976 with these thoughts:

I stop here, short of action, halfway between literature and ecology, the energy pathways obscured, the circuits of life broken between words and actions, visions and action, the verbal domain and the non-verbal domain between literature and the biosphere — because I can't go any further. (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 121)

Where the relationship between literature and ecology has progressed since Ruckert's essay feels paradoxically like nowhere and everywhere. Revisionist ecocritics had, and still have, a large task before them. Critics, scholars and writers have embarked on the journey of transforming ecocriticism's ideas into actions through the momentum it has generated. Buell says, "Although the study of literature in relation to the physical environment dates back almost as far as literary criticism itself, only in the 1990s has it assumed the proportions of a movement" ("Forum" 1090). In other ways also it has helped to, as Ruckert says, "resolve the fundamental paradox of this profession [literary scholarship] and get out of our heads" (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 121). The use of unconventional texts, narrative scholarship, as a constituent of environmental criticism is not the only way ecocriticism has expanded interest in literary theory beyond academic circles; unorthodox leaders in the movement have also contributed to the expansion and success of ecocriticism.

Through leaders like Glenn A. Love ecocriticism has not only broken from traditional pastoral ideals, which speaks of its desire to connect with an audience that extends beyond the walls of conventional academia, but it has also severed itself from the assumption that civilization and therefore academia are the realms in which the eastern United States and or prominent universities have priority. Love argues that the pastoral ideal truly belongs to American western writing. The eastern United States has long been regarded as the leader of academia, but, unlike many other literary theories, not only has the western United States led the way in ecocriticism, but it has done so through organizations not associated with prominent universities. In a discussion concerning the use of ecocriticism's unconventional methods that have instigated unfavorable criticism, Buell says:

Another ground of skepticism might have been the movement's [ecocriticism's] provenance as the offshoot of an association of second-level prestige whose principal support base lay mostly outside the prominent American university departments. For the Western American Literature Association to presume to instigate a revolution in literary studies seemed to some observers the equivalent of a new school of criticism in China being fomented from some outpost in that country's own "far west," Sinjiang. (*Future 7*)

Much of the literature produced from the American West has long been inspired by the rugged vast, but now shrinking, western landscape. Love writes, "Much of what it means to be a western writer is to risk the contemptuous epithet, nature-lover" (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 233). He lists nature writers such as Willa Cather, Mary Austin, Leslie Marmon Silko, Robinson Jeffers, Wallace Stegner and Gary Snyder as belonging to this

long tradition. Writers like these, who venture into the western deserts and other harsh landscapes, represent the apex of a transformed pastoral thinking because the American West is as distant from the eastern United States, associated with American civilization, as one can go.

By venturing west these writers separated themselves from civilization more than the embodiment of nature writing, Thoreau. As Buell says:

Like John Muir and other western environmental writers, Abbey saw the element of self-deception in Thoreau's professed love of wildness and wanted both to chide and to fulfill Thoreau's self-styled narrative of return to the primal by bonding to a landscape far more primal than Thoreau ever knew: "a country with only the slightest traces of human history." (*Environmental Imagination* 71)

The West and the desert were environments considered more primal than the Thoreau's cabin in the woods, never mind the trailer with a generator for electricity in which Abbey resided. Bennett says, "[T]he first-wave of ecocriticism embraced those environments at furthest remove from human-habitation—the pastoral and the wild—as represented by a narrowly defined genre of nature writing" (208). Bennett argues that first-wave ecocritics were looking for the "deepest shade of green," the most "earth-centered," versus "human-centered," texts (208). This attitude speaks of first-wave critics' desire to remove themselves from anthropocentrism and civilization, and in the West many not have literally represented the "deepest shade of green," but it can be argued that as the East became more industrial, the West was the more "earth-centered" of the two. Even Thoreau in his day was fascinated with the "wild" American Western frontier. In his

article, "Thoreau's Notes on Journey West: Nature Writing or Environmental History," Daniel J. Philippon says, "[M]any of Thoreau's works demonstrate his preoccupation with the West and his identification of it with America's literary and national destiny" (106). Philippon says:

[T]he great west and north west stretching on infinitely far and grand and wild, qualifying all our thoughts. That is the only America I know. I prize this western reserve chiefly for its intellectual value. That is the road to a new life and freedom [ . . . ] The great northwest where several of our shrubs, fruitless here, retain, and mature their fruits properly. (Thoreau qtd. in Philippon 106)

The American pastoral dream was always moving further west. In Thoreau's time, the East was embarking on the industrial revolution while the West remained "untamed," "wild," and in many people's opinions unconquerable. Thoreau's comment that, "That is the only America I know," demonstrates the hold the American pastoral tradition had over Americans. As Thoreau says in his essay "Walking," "We go eastward to realize history and the study of the works of art and literature, retracing the steps of the race; we go westward as into the future, with a spirit of enterprise and adventure" (404). As the East became more and more civilized, it became unrecognizable to those whose identity as Americans was partially defined by the vast open spaces America once offered. The East had once been Europe's "wild" and "untamed" space on which to project their dreams of freedom, but as it became more civilized and more industrialized, people like Thoreau cast their hopes out further to the West. Thoreau says, "I must walk toward Oregon, and not toward Europe. And that way the nation is moving, and I may say that mankind is progress from east to west" (404).

Despite the fact that many of America's greatest novelists have had a fascination with America's long standing pastoral tradition and the West, Love and other advocates of western literature discuss how America has not fulfilled, and willfully cast aside, what many consider to be "America's literary and national destiny." Love writes:

Fred Erisman made the point over ten years ago in an essay entitled "Western Fiction as an Ecological Parable," that much western American literature is an implicit plea for ecological awareness and activism. Even earlier, Thomas J. Lyon has posited hopefully that "the West's great contribution to American culture will be in codifying and directing the natural drive toward ecological thought, a flowering of regional literature into literally world-wide attention and relevance." I think that many of us have found ourselves drawn to western literature by such a sense of its significance. Perversely enough, it is just this sort of literature rooted in a real world which is ignored or devalued by such modish surveys as the recently published Columbia Literary History of the United States. (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 230)

If the eastern United States has sometimes represented civilization and literature and literary critics have long been concerned with human-centered texts, then it stands to reason that western literature, which has long been concerned with nature-centered texts, has been labeled unimportant. In the end, Love states that, "the discipline of western American literature belongs in the forefront of the predicted critical shift" (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 236). The critical shift is the shift from pastoral and ecocritical methods that once defined America, but with an urban population exponentially growing, have become outdated. Love also reminds the reader that, "western American literature

is not unique in its ecological perspective and that we need to recognize our kinship with nature-oriented writers in New England, in Canada, Europe, in South and Central America. . .”(qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 237). Love’s call to find connections across ecological perspectives speaks of the direction ecocriticism embarked upon in the 1990s after amalgamating the studies of the past. The long history of pastoral writing in America is what shapes current ecocritical thinking and that is why it is important to look at the philosophy and writing that American pastoral tradition encouraged.

In the chapter on Abbey, I will examine how Abbey’s decision to not just separate himself from society, but to do it in the “uncivilized” West helped him to become known as the “most radical, iconoclastic figure of the lot [inhabitants of the wild]” (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 304). Not only does Abbey’s venture into the West represent the apex of pastoral thinking, but it also speaks of the long tradition of nature writing and regional texts that the West has long been condemned for. While many revisionist ecocritics like Love seek recognition of nature-writing texts long associated with the West, they also wish to redefine first-wave ecocritic’s binary way of thinking.

In Terry Tempest Williams’s narrative, *Refuge*, the reader witnesses the fall of the binary opposition as the narrator finds rejuvenation in both nature and civilization. Another example might be Cormac McCarthy’s *All the Pretty Horses*. In the novel the narrator, John Grady Cole, seeks to reestablish those binaries. He follows the tradition of seeking comfort away from civilization, but the modern twist is that he fails and what he finds in the pastoral is not all worth celebrating. In this sense, McCarthy’s novel is a demonstration of those binaries’ deconstruction in the modern world for a multitude of reasons: it is much more difficult to escape civilization; when one is able to escape, one

is most often confronted by poverty or lawlessness that he or she is unprepared to deal with; and finally, all of these aspects of the book, represent the passing of an important feature of the American identity: freedom and opportunity that the land, taken from the Indians, represented. The changing feature of American identity has also changed the concerns and concentrations of ecocriticism which have evolved into numerous important discourses.

One changing focus of ecocriticism, as discussed previously, is the move away from a concentration on binaries, such as culture and nature, to a focus on connections. This change reflects the changing identity of America in many ways: the landscape of America as more urban than not, the gap between the word and world, in which the world lives in nature and civilization, but the word rejects civilization. The desire to connect civilization and nature is evident in many of the discourses developing in ecocriticism.

One of the basic premises of nature writing and ecocriticism is that human's self-centered tendencies are destructive to themselves and everything around them. Many ecocritics believe one way to empower their field and facilitate better nature writing is to create a dialogue within the field that moves beyond the white male seeking self-awareness in the rural landscape. In his essay, "Nature in the Apartment: Humans, Pets, and the Value of Incommensurability," David R. Shumway discusses the importance of breaking down the culture/nature binary inherited from writers like Thoreau and John Muir. Many nature writers have been influenced by this philosophy and, as is evident in their writing, seek to deconstruct the culture/nature "myth" (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 46) while still centering their critique on how they present in the text. One way to examine nature in a new way might be using the psychological aspect of how humans

interact with nature. In *Seeking Awareness in Nature Writing: Henry Thoreau, Annie Dilliard, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, Barry Lopez*, Scott Slovic examines how nature writers are not just probing nature but seeking a psychological phenomenon of “awareness.” This concept echoes many first-wave nature writers’ desire to rejuvenate in nature through philosophical musings away from civilization, but if Slovic’s theories are applied to texts outside the realm of nature writing, they might provide a pathway for new areas of exploration. Mossman describes nature writing in the following terms:

Thus, nature writing is a genre concerned with the “egos” or the self, and the world that surrounds that self; it is, in fact, concerned most with that self’s interaction with that world, with “nature.” The self is understood to be “historical,” to be layered with cultural and mythic contextualities which the writer either strips away or better understands in the naked, solely individual observation, exploration, and contemplation of the natural world; the function, indeed, of “nature writing” is to enact that process, to discover some kind of self.

(2)

Today nature writing texts, however, often seek the “self” in cultural and natural arenas. The environmental philosophy shaping today’s ecocriticism and nature writing does not strip away the layers of cultural and mythic aspects of the “self.” Those layers of context of the narrator are as important to the “self” as the natural environment. In writers like Abbey, it was important to isolate themselves from civilization in order to discover some kind of self. In more recent books like Terry Tempest Williams’s *Refuge*, the narrator’s multi-faceted approach to discovery of the “self” demonstrates what many ecocritics are beginning to consider “better nature writing.” Discovery of the “self” has always played

an important role in nature writing. Slovic's book helps to understand further nature writing while also providing a new tool with which to explore texts outside of nature writing. These departures from the traditional genre relate to the new generation of nature writers and ecocritics who emphasize connection between nature and culture.

The emphasis on connection reaches a wider audience because it is a more true reflection of western society where most people live in suburban or urban landscapes.

Buell says:

I found myself agreeing with those who thought the concentration on "environment" as "nature" and on nature writing as the most representative environmental genre were too restrictive, and that a mature environmental aesthetics- or ethics, or politic - must take into account the interpenetration of metropolis and outback, of anthropocentric as well as biocentric concerns. (*Future* 22-23)

According to Buell and many others, the term "environment" in environmental studies must redefine itself to include areas outside the rural landscape. "Environment," in the public sphere today connotes images of pastoral, not urban landscapes. One reason Buell uses "environmental criticism" in his book's title instead of *ecocriticism* is to facilitate in the move away from pastoral ideology that celebrates nature and criticizes culture and draws a distinct line between the two. After discussing the title of his book at length, Buell says, "A more substantive reason for belaboring the terminology issue is the implicit narrowness of the 'eco,' insofar as it connotes the 'natural' *rather than* the "built" environment" (*Future* 12). Revisionist writers often portray the natural world in a manner that allows for a greater connection between civilization and nature than

traditional nature writing. Many of the texts we label “nature” today are texts that weave between civilization and nature. Terry Tempest Williams’s willingness to draw connections between the natural environment and culture resonate with a broader audience and, therefore, distinguish her from first-wave nature writers who felt the “self” could only truly be found outside the realm of civilization.

However, as Stephanie Sarver writes, a new generation of nature writers “such as Rick Bass and Terry Tempest Williams [. . .] are attentive to the ways that nature informs and shapes human experience” (109). These writers focus the connection between humans and nature as much as the damage inflicted on nature by humans. Williams and Bass’s concentration on connections rather than differences contributes to their emergence as “likely subjects of future scholarly scrutiny” (Sarver 109). Williams’s willingness to accept and explore life’s complications distinguishes *Refuge* from many traditional nature writers because, instead of constructing the classic oppositions within her text, Williams blurs the lines between fiction and fact, personal and historical, and civilization and nature. Many contemporary critics echo Sarver and Buell when he writes:

Although there is something potentially noble about human attempts to speak ecocentrically against human domination, unless one proceeds very cautiously there soon becomes something quixotic and presumptuous about it too. All too often, arguments about curbing species self-interest boil down to setting limits you mostly want to see other people observe. (*Future* 8)

The themes in Williams’s book and her connection with nature allow ecocritics to analyze *Refuge* in a variety of ways. It is not just themes in narrative scholarship like Williams’s that lend themselves to a variety of theories; it is ecocriticism’s and literary

theory's past that shapes the way one analyzes texts. Buell comments on the complexity and richness of the field when he says:

[T]he story of literary ecocriticism's relation to critical models has been unfolding less as a story of dogged recalcitrance [. . .] than as a quest for adequate models of inquiry from the plethora of possible alternatives that offer themselves from whatever disciplinary quarter. Cybernetics, evolutionary biology, landscape ecology, risk theory, phenomenology, environmental ethics, feminist theory. . . psychology [. . .] all these and more, each fraught with its own internal wranglings — have presented themselves as correctives or enhancements to literary theory's preexisting toolkit. The menu of approaches continues to expand, and the combinations have become ever more proliferate and complex. (*Future* 10)

In recent years two of the most common approaches in ecocriticism have been feminist theory and environmental ethics. Many contemporary nature texts and fiction texts lend themselves easily to examination through the lens of ecofeminism or environmental justice. Ecofeminism developed from the same principles Ruckert outlined in *man's* anthropocentric tendencies. Ecofeminists often believe that, like nature, they have been “conquer[ed], humanize[ed] (in this case de-humanized), domesticate[d], violate[d], and exploit[ed]” (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 113). Ruckert did not use these terms to describe women; he used them to describe nature, as quoted above, but many ecofeminists believe that such verbs describe the parallels between themselves and the land. In her essay, “Heroines of Nature,” Vera L. Norwood writes, “[W]omen's separation from pristine nature can be traced to the belief that woman is to man as nature is to culture. As Sherry Ortner posits in her essay on the subject, the issue is not the

belief that women *are* nature but that they are closer to nature than men” (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 324). Many contemporary ecocritics share Ortner’s belief. In Charles Mitchell’s article “Reclaiming the Sacred Landscape: Terry Tempest Williams, Kathleen Norris, and the Other Nature Writing,” Mitchell draws a demarcation similar to first and revisionist ecocritics, but his line further differentiates by defining certain present day female writers against past male nature writers like John Muir and those who follow in Muir’s “neoromantic strain of environmentalism” (165). The neoromantic strain of environmentalism has many similarities with deep ecology and has been defined as the following:

nature, pure and wild, is defined by the absence, or the exclusion, of the human; the more protected a landscape is from human intrusion, the closer it is to God; and if the landscape must be preserved to be sacred, then that which it is preserved from—the human—is of necessity profane. (165)

Mitchell further defines the split between traditional nature writers and the revisionist nature writers through gender. He says:

Thoreau’s ‘Walking,’ perhaps the seminal essay in this tradition, suggests that one might saunter into Nature only if one were “ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends” and devote a minimum of four hours to the experience. Nature, as the sacred retreat of the solitary male, must be preserved from the profaning influences of domesticity and civilization. (170)

According to Mitchell, the traditional nature writers felt that the farther they removed themselves from civilization and domesticity, the closer they could become to nature, and the wilder the landscape became. Ecofeminists work to deconstruct these traditional

viewpoints. Ecofeminists posit that nature and the wild are not associated with man, but with woman, and many ecofeminists also, as Mitchell states, “suggest that the experience of the sacred within a natural landscape depends on a history of interaction with that landscape, that human presence is a corequisite to rather than an inevitable corruption of that experience” (Mitchell 3). For some female nature writers, the connection they have with the land is often directly linked with their femininity and the subjugation both women and nature have experienced from men.

Ecocriticism is not simple, and neither are the discourses developing within it. Within ecofeminism, there is also a strain of revisionist ecocriticism that does not focus on the subjugation women and nature have in common, but instead concentrates on women’s desire, and certain women’s history, as women who move beyond the boundaries of domesticity and conquer the land alongside the men. Some ecofeminists feel that a stronger and more relevant area of study in ecofeminism is how women have been excluded from participating in the discovery and adventures of the American pastoral tradition. Wood writes that women have been excluded from “participation in discovery of the wild American landscape” (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 324). Wood then asks the reader, “[H]ow does one account for the women, such as those discussed herein, who opt to adventure forth and/or who support conservation movements?” (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 325). If the assumption is that women preferred cultivated gardens to the wild, uncultivated landscapes, then why is there evidence that certain women sought adventure in the wild just like the men? These questions and theories contribute to ecofeminists ever growing number of scholars. According to Buell, “This [Ecofeminism] at all events seems to be the most dynamic movement within

environmental criticism right now” (*Future* 112). Like many of the movements within revisionist ecocriticism, ecofeminism uses as its foundation other literary theories; in the case of ecofeminism, these include literature-and-the environment and feminist studies.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, revisionist ecocritics seek new paths for ecocriticism while still being mindful of those who came before them. While ecocriticism wants to move beyond nature writing and is more interested in connections rather than oppositions between culture and nature, it also works to remain true to what has, from the beginning, defined ecocriticism.

Unlike other literary theories “the world” in ecocriticism is not synonymous with society, but instead it encompasses the entire ecosphere. This distinction serves to separate ecocriticism from other critical theories. What current ecocritics and nature writers grapple with is to what extent society should be considered in their analysis and writing. Without jeopardizing the dominant role of nature, revisionist ecocritics would like to bring society back into the fold. In his article, “Deeper Shades of Green,” Michael Bennett says, “the new wave of ecocriticism is interested in the interconnections between urban and non-urban spaces, humans and nonhumans, traditional and experimental genres” (208). Through examination of novels and texts that are not expressly nature writing and by focusing on the connection between society and nature, ecocritics have created a new dialogue within the ecocritical field and advanced the move away from first-wave ecocritical thought. The discussion of how nature is represented in non-nature centered texts inevitably deviates from first-wave environmental theory and texts by reevaluating the relationship between civilization and nature. Contemporary ecocritics continue to differentiate themselves from other literary theories by extracting from texts

how nature is represented, but rather than setting up nature and civilization as opposites, they seek to explore the relationship and connections between the two. As ecocritics move from more nature-centered texts to a broader range of texts to include poetry and fiction, certain concerns within the field are being voiced. While ecocritics enthusiastically seek to elaborate on first-wave ideals and develop their own, there are voices reminding revisionist ecocritics not to stray too far from the original goal of ecocriticism. In his essay "Speaking a Word for Nature," Scott Russell Sanders says:

However accurately it reflects the surface of our times, fiction that never looks beyond the human realm is profoundly false, and therefore, pathological. No matter how urban our experience, no matter how oblivious we may be towards nature, we are nonetheless animals, two-legged sacks of meat and blood and bone dependent on the whole living planet for our survival. (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 194)

In a world that moves quickly and in a field that desperately wants to create a large following, reminders like Sanders's, help critics to remember the true purpose of ecocriticism and resonate strongly. That is why it is important to look closely at what ecocriticism is leaving behind and simultaneously embracing. How can ecocritics keep nature as the most important aspect and still speak to large populations of people whose only encounter with nature is trees growing from cement sidewalks? And how should ecocritics balance their study of nature with the fact that the field of humanities is a field concerned with humankind and texts? One way is to utilize, but reshape, the lessons writers like Edward Abbey and other first-wave nature writers and ecocritics taught the United States.

## CHAPTER II

### EDWARD ABBEY: A POSTMODERN NATURE WRITER

As a representation of first-wave ecocriticism, this chapter will examine Edward Abbey. However, as one will notice as he or she reads through the chapter, Abbey does not fit neatly into the category. That is why it is important to reiterate Buell's point that the terms *first-wave* and *revisionist* ecocriticism must be applied loosely. Writers and critics often, if not always, have attributes of both. That being said an examination of Abbey lends one the opportunity to examine a writer who simultaneously took first-wave ideology to an apex and began, with his postmodern outlook on life, to dabble in revisionist ideology.

While many of the major themes in Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* echo traditional themes found in pastoral writing and first-wave ecocriticism, Abbey also undermines these same themes by taking them to their extreme and in the process revealing their shortcomings. The major difference between Abbey and previous pastoral writers is the landscape he chooses as a setting for his narrative. In his essay, "Desert Solitaire: Counter-Friction to the Machine in the Garden," Don Scheese explains that *Desert Solitaire* is unique in its defense of the anti-pastoral environment, "Abbey presents a desert aesthetic, an explanation of how to appreciate a land that, although antithetical to the traditional notion of the pastoral, is lovely for its spareness and

and efficiency” (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 307). Abbey’s decision to write about the desert stems from a deep love for the desert’s rugged, harsh landscapes, and through beautifully commanding and sparse language, he imparts this love to the reader.

Additionally, Abbey’s choice of the desert as his setting speaks of his strong dislike for what he often referred to as “mental ruts.” Abbey did not believe people should ascribe to one ideology, and his innovative imitation and deconstruction of previous pastoral writers and environmental theories underscores this belief.

Using Thoreau as a framework for traditional pastoral writing, this chapter attempts to distinguish and draw parallels between traditional pastoral writing and Edward Abbey. The comparison between Abbey and traditional nature writers serves to clarify the ways in which Abbey represented an apex in environmental thinking. One can imagine a cumulative curve with Thoreau at the beginning and Abbey at the apex. The analogy of the cumulative curve provides a visual representation of the accumulation of knowledge and tradition over time. Many ecocritics begin their discussions of environmental texts with Thoreau, building their arguments on the foundation of Thoreau’s writings and philosophy. Other writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman also helped to develop the pastoral ideology as an integral part of American identity and should be considered integral to the foundation of the literary tradition. Abbey simultaneously embraces the American pastoral identity, redefines it, and mourns its passing as Americans in the 1960s witnessed unprecedented population growth and the nuclear bomb tests on American landscapes.

Before continuing I should note that I refer to *Desert Solitaire* as a narrative throughout this chapter. Abbey is certainly writing autobiographically, but he also leaves

certain facts out and embellishes others in order to follow more closely traditional nature writing and environmental ideology. For example, Abbey, following traditional pastoral narratives, has ventured out into the land to rejuvenate in the wilderness for a period of time before returning to civilization. While the reader is aware he is living in a trailer with modern appliances, Abbey does not mention that his wife lived at Arches National Park with him for some part of his employment there. By maintaining certain structural elements and ideology of traditional nature writers, Abbey purposely positions *Desert Solitaire* in this tradition, which then allows him to embrace and deconstruct different aspects of the ideology. Because of Abbey's embellishments and exclusions, *Desert Solitaire* cannot be referred to as an autobiography, nor can it be called fiction. In the next section, I would like to pursue the previously briefly mentioned decision of Abbey's to place his narrative in a Southwestern desert as not just a matter of preference but also a literary device.

Abbey represents the peak of first-wave thought and ideals. If one traces American first-wave philosophy to its beginnings, it no doubt predates Thoreau, but that is where many critics begin their discussions, because Abbey represents the apex of this thinking. In the first chapter Abbey writes that he chooses "[t]he slickrock desert. The red dust and the burnt cliffs and the lonely sky—all that which lies beyond the end of the roads" (1) over any other place. In these sentences he simultaneously connects himself to and distinguishes himself from previous nature, i.e. pastoral, writers. He left civilization to rejuvenate, as pastoral writers traditionally have, but he went further: to the end of the road. He went west, and he challenged or disobeyed government regulations to a larger extent than those before and after him.

If one views Abbey and Thoreau on a continuum, one sees Thoreau as separating himself from civilization but occasionally praising it in order to find peace and solitude. Abbey also seeks peace and solitude away from civilization, but living during the time period he does and witnessing such actions as the after effects of the nuclear bomb, he sees the damage civilization's technological developments can do. Therefore, he not only separates himself, but he tries to push away civilization's encroachments upon nature. Abbey's resistance to civilization's encroachments is exemplified in his rhetoric concerning motorized vehicles: "[T]he quality of the mechanized tourists—the Wheelchair Explorers—who are at once the consumers of the raw material and the victims of Industrial Tourism" (61). Perhaps even more telling than Abbey's adamant belief that motorized vehicles have no place in national parks is the section where the narrator of *Desert Solitaire* removes the survey stakes planted in the ground as markers designating where crews would build a new pavement road (Abbey 73). Buell discusses how this particular action exceeds any protests Thoreau ever considered or acted upon:

More important, what Abbey does, however futile, goes beyond anything ever thought or done by Thoreau, who many consider Abbey's spiritual mentor. Thoreau's fervent opposition to society's mad thirst for material wealth and comfort never developed into anything beyond literary rhetoric or a somewhat eccentric lifestyle. In all of *Walden* there is not one instance even vaguely comparable to Abbey's sabotaging the survey route. Such a distinction illustrates a critical juncture between Abbey and Thoreau [. . .] If Thoreau was incapable of such an act, it may be in part because his time did not demand one. His failure to take an active and subversive role

against man's intrusions into the wilderness is understandable, if still lamentable. (Quigley 321)

Abbey's action taps into a couple of important aspects of his writing. In later books Abbey would write about taking action to further extremes, which earned him the reputation as an ecoterrorist and made him an icon for extreme environmental groups like Earth First. More relevant to this thesis, however, is the manner in which such action illustrates the continuum of nature writers in the United States. As technology advanced, many nature writers' resistance to it increased. During Abbey's lifetime the United States witnessed a diminishing landscape and therefore an identity crisis. Abbey recognized that the intrusion of technology into western landscapes like the desert around Moab, Utah, ushered in a way of life that had long been coming.

Today, it is difficult to label anywhere in the United States "wild," but the West more closely fits the description than elsewhere in the continental United States. Wilderness is important to Abbey. As mentioned before, Abbey excluded certain events in his trip, and he went to great lengths to keep the text focused on wilderness and his immersion in it, rather than on culture, or any cultural constructs. In his essay, "One True Home," Tom Lynch writes: "[F]or the absence of family from *Desert Solitaire* is, I think, essential to Abbey's conception of the value of his experience of 'a season in the wilderness,' as the book is subtitled" (Quigley 89). Lynch continues to say:

His stance here seems well sanctioned by the tradition of literary natural history composition of which he is an heir (Thoreau's removal to Walden Pond, though often misconstrued as more antisocial than it was, serves as a paradigm), and in

turn Abbey's solitary experience has influenced the way others conceptualize their relationship to the land. (Quigley 89)

Even as Abbey longs to live in the wilderness, he knows that the word conjures up images that are mythical. In the chapter entitled "Down the River," as Abbey and a friend embark on a journey into the "wilderness," Abbey contemplates the word:

Suppose we say that wilderness invokes nostalgia, a justified not merely sentimental nostalgia for the lost America our forefathers knew. The word suggests the past and the unknown, the womb of earth from which we all emerged. It means something lost and something still present, something remote and at the same time intimate, something buried in our blood and nerves, something beyond us and without limit. Romance—not to be dismissed on that account. The romantic view, while not the whole truth is a necessary part of the truth. (208)

In choosing to write about the West, Abbey evokes the traditional nature writing's penchant to live in the "wild" by living in one of the few areas of the United States that could still be considered "wild." Similar to other western environmental writers, Abbey discerned an element of self-deception in Thoreau's professed love of wildness. Wanting to both chide Thoreau and fulfill his desire of escaping from civilization to the primal, Abbey sought to bond to a landscape far more primal than Thoreau ever knew. Abbey wanted to go to "a country with only the slightest traces of human history" (Abbey 294). Buell says, "The new world paradox of filling with pastoral accoutrements the landscape one has willed to be empty reaches a kind of extreme in latter-day Thoreauvian Edward Abbey" (*Future* 71). Abbey tried to avoid anthropocentric tendencies and live a biocentric life, but he found that he could not survive without such necessities as he

himself had in the desert, e.g., a trailer, water, and the usual modern conveniences.

Although Abbey follows traditional nature writers' example by excluding certain facts, such as his wife living with him for a portion of time, he also attempts to tell if not the "whole truth," then a more accurate truth than traditional nature writers. This point is illustrated not only in his analysis and discussion of the amenities he has allowed himself, a generator for electricity; the trailer etc., but also in his acknowledgment of the men whose living depends upon the demanding physical labor of working the land.

For Abbey a more accurate truth is a truth that moves away from academic language and acknowledges those who work hard toiling the land. Abbey opens the chapter "Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Parks," with a brief discussion concerning the bars of Moab crowded with "prospectors, miners, geologists, cowboys, truckdrivers, and sheep herders" (49). He describes the atmosphere of such bars as, "free and friendly, quite unlike the sad, sour gloom of most bars I have known, where nervous men in tight collars brood over their drinks between out-of-tune TV screens and remorseless clocks" (50). Abbey decides the free and friendly atmosphere is the result of a combination of reasons: the men have been working outside all day and are physically active; they are free from other people's demands because they work alone; and the beer they are drinking has a low alcohol content so the men are more "water-logged" than drunk. Abbey's discussion of the men corresponds with comments he makes throughout the text dismissing "prestigious" jobs that are more intellectually demanding than physically demanding. By venturing into civilization he veers from traditional nature writers but additionally presents a more complete picture of traditional nature writers' romance with the idea of living off the land through his observation of men whose living

depends on producing natural resources. Abbey also adds a realistic perspective to his celebratory tone towards these men by mentioning the fact that their high spirits are partially due to the “boom” in “uranium exploitation,” and such a “boom” will not last. In the end, Abbey leaves the bar with these thoughts: “In the end the beer halls of Moab, like all others, become to me depressing places” (50). His back and forth ideology hints at a greater theme in the narrative that, like his pulling up the survey stakes, underscores the difference between a nature writer writing during the postmodern period and the traditional nature writers who wrote during the American Romantic period.

Before Abbey wrote *Desert Solitaire*, he outlined various themes and ideals in journal entries that would later present themselves in the narrative. In a journal entry dated November 10<sup>th</sup> 1951, Abbey wrote:

*Art of the Novel*: Maximizing order in maximum chaos—complex symmetry as opposed to simple symmetry—simultaneity—counterpoint and contrary motion—the novel should appeal primarily to the intellect; for the emotions there is music, for the senses, color and form. (Petersen 9)

In the journal, directly above Abbey’s definition of the novel, Abbey wrote that he decided to become a regional writer and proceeded to list several areas in the Southwest that will serve as his focal points. This entry was written seventeen years before *Desert Solitaire* but alludes to Abbey’s theory of the novel that would eventually take shape in the narrative of *Desert Solitaire*. Abbey saw a setting in the desert in Moab that would provide a canvas on which to express his narrative theory. Abbey uses the desert to disorient the reader.

In his essay, “‘Rudolf the Red knows rain, dear’: The Aestheticism of Edward Abbey,” Scott Slovic discusses how Abbey disorients the reader by drawing on the reader’s expectations of the desert, such as lack of water and the sudden return of water in flash floods, and “presenting them hyperbolically, sometimes nightmarishly, so that they become defamiliarized, alien” (*Seeking* 94). In the chapters “The Serpents of Paradise,” “Cliffrose and Bayonets” and others, Abbey uses the desert and its fauna to disorient the reader.

In “The Serpents of Paradise,” Abbey finds a rattlesnake living under his house and debates whether he should kill the snake with his “revolver inside the house” (19). In the end he decides that, “Arches National Monument is meant to be among other things a sanctuary for wildlife—all forms of wildlife” (20). He removes the rattlesnake with a shovel. When he finds another rattlesnake beneath his trailer, he again considers killing it but instead is lucky enough to find a gopher snake that he keeps inside the trailer with him to eat the mice, and, therefore, keep the rattlesnake away. At this point, the reader perceives the narrator of *Desert Solitaire* is committed to protecting the wildlife of Arches National Monument. However, in the following chapter, “Cliffrose and Bayonets,” Abbey sees a cottontail rabbit and intentionally throws a stone that kills the “wicked rabbit” (41). These sections of the texts and others highlight some of the ways in which Abbey uses the desert landscape and fauna to disorient the reader and to undercut traditional expectations.

Abbey maximizes order by extracting from common knowledge the most generic expectations people have of the desert and transforming them into chaotic, intense experiences. By entitling the chapter with the snake “The Serpents of Paradise,” Abbey

conjures up expectations of the devil as the serpent in the Bible, but as a counterpoint to people's expectations, Abbey spares the rattlesnake's life and "domesticates" the gopher snake, while, ten pages later, he kills the "wicked" rabbit. The word "wicked" alludes to the expectation of snakes as wicked, evil, but instead Abbey is referring to a cottontail rabbit, an animal which people are more inclined to associate with Easter or, as simply, an innocent, helpless animal, which the audience would expect Abbey as nature writer (i.e. nature lover) would admire and protect.

Slovic interprets Abbey's killing of the rabbit as "motivated only by the desire to experience what it feels like to kill something, and to know whether or not he could survive in the desert if he 'were ever out here hungry, starving, [with] no weapon'" (*Seeking* 97). Slovic compares this to a scene in *Walden* when Thoreau is "'strongly tempted to seize and devour [a woodchuck] raw' but confines the act to the realm of thought" (*Seeking* 97). Abbey kills the rabbit just to see what it is like to kill something, but he does not eat the rabbit. Abbey alludes to Thoreau by presenting the killing of the rabbit as an experiment to see if he could survive in the wild starving and with no weapons. This is reminiscent of when Thoreau considers seizing and devouring the woodchuck as an animal, or someone starving and without the means to start a fire, might be forced to do. These musings are meant to bring readers a fuller, more in-depth, understanding of nature and further remove them from dependence on technology and the comforts of civilization. In this sense, Abbey comes one step closer to nature than Thoreau by experiencing the kill, but his decision not to eat the rabbit serves to undermine this theory. Toward the end of the chapter Abbey says, "I will venture, in the power of the odd and unexpected to startle the senses and surprise the mind out of their

ruts of habit” (45). In the tradition of nature writers, Abbey is seeking a closer understanding of nature. As Slovic says;

He is rejoicing in unity but depicting actual disunity; there is a discordance between the deed itself and the language of the account, between the destruction of an animal carefully chosen for its benignity and the whimsically parodic prose: “The wicked rabbit is dead.” (*Seeking* 97)

This language simultaneously evokes and dismisses Thoreau and theories of first-wave ecocritics while also embracing a newer theory at the time: postmodernism.

Many revisionist ecocritics, like Glenn A. Love, reject postmodernism. In his essay, “Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism,” Love writes, “the revaluation of nature will be accompanied by a major reordering of the literary genres, with realist and other discourse which values unity over post-structuralist nihilism” (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 236). As discussed in chapter one, Love feels strongly that Western writers and critics, “have been in the forefront in the surge of recent publications on nature writing” (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm 236). Yet earlier ecocritics and writers explored postmodern theories in relation to nature writing. Postmodernism is an example of how Abbey took traditional nature writing to new heights.

In her essay, “Getting the Desert into a Book,” Claire Lawrence says, “Abbey wants the culture taken out of his vision of the desert; he longs for some kind of pure, innocent experience of nature” (qtd. in Quigley 157). This approach follows traditional nature writing’s avoidance of anthropocentrism, which correlates with its perception of culture as “tainted” (Quigley 157). Lawrence notes the following passage from Thomas J. Lyon’s essay, “A Taxonomy of Nature Writing”:

Essays of solitude or escape from the city, as might be expected, work much with the contrast between conventional existence and the more intense, wakeful life in contrast with nature. This subtype . . . tends to be much more critical and radical. [Like] Thoreau at Walden, anathematizing the false economy of society. (qtd. in Quigley 157)

As Lawrence points out, a post-structuralist or postmodernist would say Abbey's desire to escape from conventional existence is doomed. *Desert Solitaire* begins with the narrator's determination to experience nature removed from civilization and anthropocentric tendencies, but the narrative ends with the narrator's realization that this goal is impossible. Abbey cannot separate culture from nature because, as Lawrence writes, "perception itself is structured by culture" (qtd. in Quigley 157). Lawrence tells the reader that Abbey realizes this conclusion by the end of the book, and while this point is true, Abbey's determination to awaken the reader from his or her perpetual ruts of the mind speaks of a postmodern ideology established in the beginning of the narrative.

Abbey seems to embrace the idea that nature provides awareness for the reader that does not exist in civilization, but he rejects the idea that one can make sense or put into order man's relationship with nature. Abbey's narrative puts chaos into the romantic ideals of traditional nature writers while still incorporating the "bedrock" of their philosophy. Nature is the "bedrock" of the philosophy along with the belief that culture has tainted it. As Abbey says,

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 awhile 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 the fundamental, the bedrock which sustains us. (7)

This passage and similar sentiments Abbey expresses prepare the reader for a quest in which the narrator will separate himself from society and find a deeper understanding of that self in nature. Consistent with traditional nature writers, Abbey is expressing that humans are intertwined with nature, but their tendency to relate everything to themselves--personification/anthropocentrism--and their willful separation from nature are also a separation from themselves. Yet as one reads through the narrative, Abbey asks one to commit to one ideology only to undermine it. In the introduction Abbey writes that he is "pleased enough with surfaces . . . the grasp of a child's hand in your own, the flavor of an apple," (xi) but he continually asks the reader to consider questions that probe beyond the surface:

All that is human melted with the sky and faded out beyond the mountains and I felt, as I feel — is it a paradox? — that a man can never find or need better companionship than himself. (121)

In one chapter Abbey may convince the reader that man can never find better companionship than his own, but by the next chapter, he may delve into the loneliness pressing down upon him in the desert. Another more shocking example might be the doubt Abbey raises about his commitment to nature when he drives down the highway throwing cans out the window. Throughout the narrative, Abbey prepares the reader for the absence of a clear message by never allowing him or her to extract any single moral or philosophy from the text. Modernism posits that the world is chaotic but through

writing one can find some order. Postmodernism posits that, like the ideology in *Desert Solitaire*, there is no order to be found.

As Lawrence says, Abbey expresses this lack of order and reality in the introduction of the book. But because Abbey wrote the introduction after the book, it is difficult to know if he began his trip to Moab, Utah, with intentions of finding a true reality or not. In other words, it is difficult to decipher if Abbey purposefully intended for the narrative to echo postmodern theory. Abbey's journal entry, seventeen years before the publication of *Desert Solitaire*, seems to outline a postmodern theory of the novel and his disorientation of the reader contributes to the postmodern tone of the narrative. Peter Quigley writes: "Abbey's focus on the desert has other intriguing dimensions, moving away from the romantic traditions of breakthrough, myth, discovery, utopia, and finality" (5). But the fact that in the end Abbey felt he failed at what he originally set out to do—to find the kernel of truth he sought—indicates that, despite the postmodern tone, Abbey was searching for a moral. Lawrence discusses how by the end of the book Abbey has failed at his original project in writing *Desert Solitaire* because he is unable to incorporate himself seamlessly into the natural scene of the desert (qtd. in Quigley 157). Abbey expresses this purpose in the first chapter when he writes: "I dream of a hard and brutal mysticism in which the naked self merges with a non-human world and yet somehow survives still intact, individual, separate. Paradox and bedrock" (7). He expresses his failure to do this in the introduction and in the final chapter of the book:

Where is the heart of the desert? I used to think that somewhere in the American Southwest, impossible to say exactly where, all of these wonders which intrigue the spirit would converge upon a climax and resolution.[ . . . ] Not so now I am

convinced now that the desert has no heart, that it presents a riddle which has no answer, and that the riddle itself is an illusion created by some limitation or exaggeration of the displaced human consciousness. (304)

Equipped with environmental philosophy presented in previous nature writers, Abbey attempted to carry these theories to their most extreme: not only to separate himself from civilization but to incorporate himself seamlessly into nature. Traditional nature writing is the bedrock from which he explores the desert only to find paradox everywhere. The desert is also Abbey's bedrock and through his writing, America sees the desert in a new light.

In his introduction to *Coyote in the Maze: Tracking Edward Abbey in a World of Words*, an extensive collection of essays regarding Abbey and inspired by "the wholesale dismissal of Edward Abbey in the arena of 'serious' scholarship" (Quigley 1), Quigley writes, "Abbey picks the desert, a buzzard, a snake, even in preference to humans . . . partly because he isn't supposed to, because they do not fit conventional definitions of beauty and pleasure" (2). Abbey uses the desert and its surroundings as a literary device to perplex the reader and in hopes of forcing the reader to think: use his or her "intellect." Quigley says:

If only for his unique treatment of the desert [. . .] Abbey deserves consideration. The desert becomes a focal point for Abbey for one of the most classic literary reasons: tension. Tension between nature and culture, but also between the desert and other imagery. Other narratives full of admiration for and tribute to forest and ocean have preprogrammed us to appreciate these things. In other words, as constructionists say, these representations are cultural and political

because they are ontologically prior to their associated objects. In *The New West of Edward Abbey*, Ann Ronald admits that the desert “draws me less than the powerful pull of a flowered mountain meadow. Structurally speaking, then, by focusing on the desert, its dangers, its inhospitable and formidable features, its heat, Abbey makes a literary gesture. (2)

Abbey is dislodging the mind from its mental ruts and forcing the reader to break away from traditional viewpoints and expectations; the desert not only aids in this quest, but conceptualizing the desert as the beautiful setting Abbey sees, rather than the forest or picturesque like beach, is the reader’s first mental exercise in disorientation and use of intellect.

Previous to Abbey the desert had received little attention from artists, Georgia O’Keeffe being the most recognized but also Joseph Wood Krutch and John C. Van Dyke, particularly compared to the lush green pastures or lapping waves on the beach. By using the desert, Abbey goes one step further in creating tension between culture and nature. Not only is he separating himself from civilization, but he is separating himself and the reader from established notions of beauty by venturing into a landscape for which the majority of civilization sees no use. The beauty of the ocean and the forest had already been established by civilization but not the desert. Edward Twining says: “Abbey has formulated images only inchoately present before, creating a distinctive world that is part now of our collect American imagination” (qtd. in Quigley 20). Through his use of language, Abbey successfully changes this landscape into a beautiful place where one can find “awareness.” Twining quotes Charles Bowden as saying, “Ed Abbey invented the Southwest we live in. He made us look at it, and when we looked up again we suddenly

saw it through his eyes and sensed what he sensed—we were killing the last good place” (qtd. in Quigley 20). Despite what many consider to be this major accomplishment, among others, Abbey is occasionally excluded from academia.

As ecocriticism gained momentum, some of the writers who helped to establish the genre and theory are being dismissed for what some consider out-dated environmental philosophies. While one must make room for the new and encourage growth within the field, there is much to be learned from the early nature writers and environmental scholars. Quigley and Slovic are two ecocritics who advocate teaching and studying Abbey. Quigley says:

In environmental circles, they focus on the recently emerging and admirable eco-feminist writing or the elegant world of Gary Snyder and his Buddhist aesthetics and politics. Snyder’s world is a cedar-scented place where tinkling and chimes blow lightly in the breezes of the eternal void, where we chop wood and carry water [ . . . ] However, a more charitable, wide-ranging, vigorous, and eclectic criticism would embrace all writing that exhibits stylistic, aesthetic, or cultural significance. By not doing so, English departments will continue to be targets of accusations of narrowness and hypocrisy, which some richly deserve. (7)

It seems a portion of Quigley’s attitude stems from the desire to break the boundaries drawn by first-critics and writers between nature and culture. Many focus more on connection, but it is here where people should be cautious. While connection is valuable, writers like Abbey bring something important to the discourse. If ecocriticism seeks to have a voice in the degradation of the environment, then ecocritics may have to be

willing to teach the controversial, Abbey's (perceived) endorsement of extreme action, along with the more agreeable contemporary focus on connection. This is not an endorsement of ecoterrorism, with which Abbey is often associated, but perhaps following Scott Slovic's example of teaching a book like *The Monkey Wrench Gang* as the *Lolita* of environmental literature. Abbey set out to make people think, and he succeeds. His unconventional methods can incite dialogue, and his conventional methods (going out to the desert away from civilization) can provide an example of American's fascination with open space and the associated freedom with open space that helped to instill the high value many Americans place on individualism.

Abbey ends his introduction to *Desert Solitaire* with this thought: "This is not a travel guide but an elegy. A memorial. . . . Don't drop it on your foot—throw it at something big and glassy. What do you have to lose?" (xii). *Desert Solitaire* is an elegy in more than one aspect. Nature writers like Abbey who were following in Thoreau's footsteps were confronted with a different world: a world in which civilization was encroaching on every open area. *Desert Solitaire* is an elegy to the open landscapes that were rapidly disappearing, but it is also an elegy to Abbey's vision of immersing himself into reality. *Desert Solitaire* began as an attempt to immerse himself into the desert, become one with the desert and know the desert, but by the end of the book, when he wrote the introduction, Abbey knew this goal was impossible. Lawrence says, in her essay "Getting the Desert into a Book," when he had finished writing Abbey felt, "*Desert Solitaire* [was] a very poor substitute for a book" (qtd. in Quigley 161).

Although Abbey follows in the Thoreauvian traditions of separating himself from civilization, attempting to live a biocentric lifestyle and advocating civil disobedience, he

cannot be summarized so simply. According to James Papa, most of the themes that are found in Abbey's writings—the moral responsibility and integrity of the individual; the value of nature and wilderness; and the environmental, social, and spiritual damage wrought by blind faith in technological advancement and capitalist consumption—are echoes of Thoreau's thoughts in *Walden*. But according to some, labeling Abbey a disciple of Thoreau raises certain questions. Abbey did borrow liberally from Thoreau and found his roots in Thoreau's work, but Abbey's message is full of paradoxes that are representation of the changing time period (qtd. in Quigley 317).

And by the end of the narrative, it seems Abbey has given up on some of his ideals. Anyone who knows Abbey's writings knows that this conclusion is not the case, but when analyzing only *Desert Solitaire* some of the final pages foreshadow an ecocritical philosophy that would transcend itself into future environmental literature.

Abbey says:

Moderate extremism. The best of both worlds. Unlike Thoreau who insisted on one world at a time I am attempting to make the best of two [. . .] After twenty-six weeks of sunlight and stars, wind and sky, and golden sand, I want to hear once more the crackle of clamshells on the floor of the bar in the Clam Broth House in Hoboken. I long for a view of the jolly, rosy faces on 42<sup>nd</sup> street and the cheerful throngs on the sidewalks of Atlantic Avenue. (331)

It is understandable that after twenty-six weeks, anyone would want some of the comforts of civilization, but the passage touches on something that was beginning to develop with the surplus population and echoes in Abbey's description of *Desert Solitaire* as an elegy. This end comment is ushering in new writers, like Williams, who will live in and explore

the awareness civilization and nature impart on the individual and emphasize the importance of both.

## CHAPTER III

### FINDING CONNECTION THROUGH DECONSTRUCTION: REVISION AND THE VOICE OF WOMEN

Terry Tempest Williams's book, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* 1991, provides a particularly informative example with which to study not only the umbrella definition of ecocriticism—that of relations between culture and the natural environment—but also the discourses helping to shape revisionist ecocriticism. One appeal of *Refuge* is the ease with which it lends itself to many of the revisionist discourses developed in the 1990s. As Cheryll Glotfelty notes in her article, "Flooding the Boundaries of Form: Terry Tempest Williams's Unnatural History," *Refuge* is a departure from traditional nature writing. Williams establishes the book's divergence from traditional nature writing with the title: "By titling *Refuge* 'An Unnatural History of Family and Place,' Terry Tempest Williams at once alludes to the literary tradition of natural-history writing and announces her departure from the form" (Glotfelty 293). The divergences from traditional nature writing bestow ecocritics with the opportunity to further explore the developing discourses within ecocriticism: Williams's women-centered narrative and the parallels it draws between women and the land is representative of one of the most prominent discourses evolving in ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and the damaging effects of nuclear fallout on Williams's family provide

ample room to explore environmental justice. In addition, because her work moves between urban and rural environments, *Refuge* deconstructs the binary opposition traditional nature writers often seek to establish between civilization and the natural environment. *Refuge's* central themes not only allow ecocritics the opportunity to examine different contemporary discourses developing within their field, but by weaving between fact and fiction, Williams offers readers a rare view of Mormon life as a woman.

Most nature writing is nonfiction and delves into the scientific, but Williams weaves between fiction and fact. Like Edward Abbey, Williams omits certain facts from her narrative, but Williams's omissions stem mostly from the desire to respect the importance of privacy of the Mormon church and her family. However, even with the omission of certain facts, Williams's decision to write and publish the narrative was considered a rebellious act. Lorraine Anderson says Terry Tempest Williams as a Mormon has described herself as a

radical soul in a conservative religion. She is also a feminist in a patriarchal religion, an environmentalist in one of the very few American religions that in the 1990's has not embraced ecological values, a woman who has been arrested for civil disobedience in a religion that holds obedience to civil authority as an article of faith, a childless woman in a pronatalist religion. (Anderson 1)

The decision to write and publish *Refuge* was a break from Mormon tradition and caused some within the sect to shun her. Throughout the book the tone is ambiguous: Williams is torn between the love of her religion and its leaders' emphasis on discretion. However, the losses in Williams's life contribute to her realization that the price of "obedience, [silence], is too high" (286).

From the beginning of the book, Williams draws parallels between the landscape and her life. The first sentences of the third chapter are, “The Bird Refuge has remained a constant for me, there have been times I have felt a species long before I saw it” (21). In 1983 the Great Salt Lake rose to record levels, flooding the Bird Refuge. The flooding of the bird refuge, a place Williams spent time while growing up, coincides with the diagnosis and eventual death of Williams’s mother to ovarian cancer. Williams loses her places of refuge when she loses her mother and the bird refuge. The natural flooding of the Great Salt Lake helps Williams to confront and accept the death of her mother. In the Prologue Williams writes, “The losses I encountered at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge as Great Salt Lake was rising helped me to face the losses within my family” (3-4). In her exploration and confrontation of these losses, Williams raises questions about the appropriateness of human intervention on natural life cycles.

Unlike first-wave nature writers like Abbey, for a revisionist writer like Williams, human intervention on natural life cycles is not a simple question with a yes and no answer. For Williams, the question becomes *if* people impose their cultural constructions on natural life cycles, *when* is it appropriate? In her review of *Refuge*, Marilyn R. Chandler writes:

[Williams] recognizes the pervasiveness of human intervention for both good and ill in the course of natural processes, both restorative and destructive. Her mother’s illness and the degradation of the marshlands are both caused and treated by ‘unnatural’ interventions. The question of responsibility in both cases involves those affected in deliberations about when and how and to what extent to

intervene in conditions whose natural momentum is driven by imbalance and sickness. (14)

The question of responsibility is not a simple question for Williams because her mother survived cancer previously through medical intervention. *Refuge* focuses on her mother's second battle with cancer, except this time Williams's mother chooses not to battle but to follow the natural course. In addition to Williams's struggle to accept her mother's decision to die, the flooding of the Bird Migratory, as a result of pipes laid beneath the Great Salt Lake previously, is killing much of the wildlife that Williams has observed and found rejuvenation in since she was a child. The parallel Williams draws between her mother's sickness and the imbalance of the natural landscape connects culture and nature through the unnatural interventions that caused and treated, or have the potential to treat, both situations.

Although both conditions are a result of cultural constructs, Williams's does not advocate a separation of culture from natural processes. Through lines such as "We drive through the flooding Bird Refuge in Hal's Comet convertible. It is the perfect bird watching vehicle," (48) Williams conveys an understanding and realistic recognition that humans, despite the cultural constructions they create that heal and injure, and nature are too intertwined to separate. The seamless interaction between a culture and a natural landscape Williams loves distinguishes her from first-wave environmental philosophy. Cheryll Glotfelty differentiates *Refuge* from traditional nature writing in the following ways:

Setting is one difference, for Williams describes not only natural areas but also populated urban areas and indoor settings, places such as downtown Salt Lake

City. [. . .] Subject matter is another difference, for the book is about people as much as it is about nature. Williams writes about her family, especially about the strong bonds among generations of women. [. . .] Extending her sense of family, Williams probes into Mormon history and culture. (294)

These departures from the traditional genre relate back to the new generation of nature writers who emphasize connection between nature and culture. Just as *Desert Solitaire* is a reflection of its time, so is *Refuge*.

Although Williams grew up with an intimate relationship to the natural environment, most Americans today are growing up with an intimate relationship to concrete, skyscrapers, and the urban lifestyle. One reason, among many, that readers from all realms of life relate to *Refuge* is that the narrator of the text seeks solace in natural environments *and* in family and religion, constructs typically associated with civilization. Religion and family are no less important to the narrator than nature. Readers know this from the beginning of the narrative when the narrator says, “In Mormon culture, that is one of the things you do know—history and genealogy. I come from a family with deep roots in the American West” (Williams 13). In these two sentences Williams lays out the three main themes of her book: family, religion, and the American West. She also provides a connection to the text for millions of readers. People relate to the importance of family, religion and place, but unlike many pastoral texts, the reader does not feel obliged to prioritize the three. The narrator’s passion for the American West, while not subtle, does not denounce civilization—even those who are hired to lay concrete over natural landscapes.

*Refuge* reaches a broad audience by evoking a feeling of unity between the narrator and the reader. The narrator saves her criticism for the government's decision to build a new causeway on her bird sanctuary. Williams demonstrates this point throughout the book and again in the following conversation between herself and a Parks and Recreation employee:

“So what do you really think about the government wanting to build a new causeway to the island?”

“Me?” asks the employee who noticed the pelicans. “I just work here.”

I tell him his eyes don't look like he just works here. He grins. He reminds me of my brothers. (63)

In this passage Williams demonstrates her understanding of the ambiguity most people feel about “saving the environment.” The narrator makes a point to refer to the employee as the one “who noticed the pelicans.” Many people work or know someone whose livelihood depends on the exploitation of the environment, but it does not mean that the person does not appreciate or notice his or her natural surroundings. Perhaps the narrator is only projecting her own feelings onto the employee, but the reader can see his or her own “brother” as the employee. In addition Williams's inclusion of the employee's smile after the narrator tells him he does not “look like he just works here,” indicates the employee is not someone who just works there but is someone who thinks and has opinions about the work he does there. His unwillingness to express his opinions implies a conflict of interest between the employee and the government and, as a possible result, a threat to his livelihood. The government in *Refuge* is at fault, not the people.

The recognition of people's dependence on natural resources in conflict with the changing and depletion of natural resources creates an ambiguity that pastoral ideology, with its frequent condemnation of society, has often not allowed. Williams does not reject society as many first wave nature writers before her did: Thoreau lived in the woods, Abbey lived in Arches National Park, but in *Refuge* the narrator embraces society and nature.<sup>2</sup>

Williams's narrative, while transparent in objective, draws parallels between civilization and nature. Buell says:

That swerve (from first to second wave environmental writers in this case) has since been taken further in the self-conscious hybridization of traditional rural-focused nature writing and epidemiological analysis in such post-Carson feminist writers as Terry Tempest Williams and Sandra Steingraber, whose autobiographical narratives of environmental cancer-clusters self-consciously interlace metropolitan and exurban genres and locales. (*Future* 25)

Williams "swerve" includes not only addressing the ambiguity most people feel about the environment but also rejecting many first wave writers' determination to avoid anthropocentrism. Many second wave nature writers unapologetically use such literary techniques as personification, considered anthropocentric, to facilitate a bond between readers and the natural environment. Williams's personification often serves more than one purpose. For example, in chapter five the personification of the birds serves not only to connect readers with the animals but also as a reflection on humans as a species.

In Chapter Five, "Peregrine Falcon" Williams first observes the Peregrine Falcons at a dumpster and then compares them to humans:

I admire starling's remarkable adaptability. They'll eat anything just like us. I don't want to like them. They are common. They are aggressive. They behave poorly, crowding out other birds. Perhaps we project on to starlings that which we deplore in ourselves: our numbers, our aggression, our greed, and our cruelty. Like starlings, we are taking over the world. (55-56)

Williams unapologetically takes a biocentric viewpoint in this chapter. Her comparison of the birds to humans is unflattering but sympathetic. The narrator tells the reader that she does not want to like these birds because they “eat anything just like us,” and they exhibit many negative attributes of humans: greed, aggression, and cruelty. Yet the narrator has simultaneously evoked empathy for these birds by drawing parallels between the birds and humans. The narrator’s fondness for the birds, despite their flaws, is similar to the fondness she feels toward her own species, despite its flaws. Readers can appreciate this comparison because, while highlighting the negative characteristics, it does not condemn the birds or humans for their actions. It recognizes the reason for the behaviors and, therefore, addresses the ambiguity of the situation. The passage hinges on the word “adaptability.” The narrator likes these birds and forgives their behavior because it is a means of survival for them. Passages like this one in *Refuge* help the book appeal to a wider audience by connecting civilization to nature rather than setting them up as binary oppositions.

In writers like Williams, then, avoiding anthropocentrism is of little importance; the important matter is the history and connection with the land. Williams’s blatant anthropocentrism underscores some revisionist environmental scholars’ belief that anthropocentrism has its place in green studies. Dominic Head writes:

My worry is that if a transitional dynamic is not cultivated within ecocriticism, together with an acknowledged anthropocentrism, this [ecocriticism] is a critical practice which will get precisely nowhere, confining itself to an unrealized utopia. (240)

If ecocritics dismiss books like *Refuge* because of their anthropocentrism, they undermine one of their main goals, which is, according to Terrell Dixon, to “move beyond the notion of environment from abstraction to a tangible concern” (qtd. in *Future* 29). Williams’s decision to write about people and the environment supports revisionists’ desire to move further from abstraction because Williams’s narrative is not a voyage away from culture in order to philosophize. Williams’s seeks awareness from nature and culture, like first-wave nature writers, but it is a less abstract awareness; Williams enlightenment is learning how to cope with change, not how to immerse oneself seamlessly into nature. Readers relate to coping with change, and in this manner the loss of Williams’s mother and the landscape she had known since she was a girl becomes tangible to the reader. In addition humans’ dependence on natural resources is a reality in Williams’s narrative and not an action that could potentially stop if the people would only decide to do so.

Williams is sympathetic to humans’ use of natural resources. In the chapter titled “Magpies” Williams goes with her father to survey the land where the government would like to build pumps to redirect the Great Salt Lake's flooding. Williams is distraught because of the politicians’ decision to build the pump, but she is equally distraught by how the natural rise of the Great Salt Lake has transformed the landscape. Her reaction to these incidents demonstrates further her understanding of life’s randomness and to

create a connection with the readers. Williams's characterization of her father works to deepen the connection with the reader because her father is someone "everyone knows." In a review of *Refuge*, Melissa A. Goldthwaite summarizes Williams's own description of her father:

Williams describes her father, a pipe contractor and a conservative, as the quintessential Marlboro man without the cigarette—a rugged individual with firm opinions. Despite their political differences, Williams is also quick to point out her father's connection to the land—that he works outside, along with his sons and other family members, digging in the earth. (344)

He survives and supports his family by exploiting the land, yet he is also someone who understands the land better than the politicians who pass laws regulating the land. Williams makes this point throughout the book and in the following quote from the narrator's father:

"Politicians don't understand that the land, the water, the air all have minds of their own. I understand it because I work with the elements every day. Our livelihood depends on it. If it rains, we quit. If it's a hundred degrees outside, our men suffer. And when the ground freezes, we can't lay pipe. If we don't make adjustments with the environment, our company goes broke." He looked out over the huge body of water glistening with salt crystals. "Sure, this lake has a mind, but it cares nothing for ours." (139)

As with many second wave nature writers, the opposition is not between the people, civilians, and the land, but between those removed from direct contact with the land they pass laws to control and those who depend on and love the land. However, as the

narrator's father points out, the love for the land that people like the narrator have is unrequited. In this passage Williams's portrays her father as a man wise to the ways of nature and who, unlike many first-wave pastoral writers, has spent years working with the land to gain this wisdom. Unlike the employee who did not want to express his opinions, Williams's father thinks about the larger questions and has opinions on them. Williams's father does not respect the politicians, who do not respect the laws of nature, but he also needs to make a living and, as he says, the land does not care for him. Through men like her father, Williams highlights the ambiguity that people who make their living off the land feel about saving the environment. Despite the straight-forward beliefs Williams's father expresses, he is a complex character who both represents Williams's connection with men and her anger at the subjugation women have experienced in the Mormon Church.

Glotfelty praises *Refuge* for breaking with accepted nature writing traditions. Early in her essay, Glotfelty says, "Many other traditional boundaries also dissolve; in fact, I argue that this book's [*Refuge*] mission is to contest boundaries of all sorts" (294). The one boundary Glotfelty criticizes Williams for leaving intact is the division between the sexes:

Yet even as the book breaches conventional boundaries of subject and form, still, there is one boundary that not only remains intact but is actually reinforced: that is the division between the sexes. In characterizing *Refuge* as an ecofeminist work, I intend this criticism to apply more broadly to the ecofeminist project. (295)

Although much of Glotfelty's point is well taken, she carries the criticism too far:

With the exception of her male family members and friends, Williams depicts men as rather dense creatures who need to feel in control and whose motto is “dollars-and cents.”[. . .] Even among her loved ones, Williams characterizes individual differences as sexlinked [. . .] While Diane’s impending death causes her husband, John Tempest, to withdraw or burst into fits of rage, daughter Terry enters ever more intimately into what she calls “the secrecy of sisterhood,” “the privacy of women.” (297)

John Tempest does “rage,” but the reader also sees him exhibit tenderness and fear. At one point when Diane Tempest’s cancer is causing her weakness, Williams’s father fears she will pass on soon: “Dad picked up his pile of seedlings and threw them in a bag. His tears were quickly absorbed into the soil. I moved closer and put my arm through his” (Williams 165). The significance of the tears being “absorbed” and, therefore, disappearing quickly serves to underscore Glotfelty’s point because it implies that Williams’s father is uncomfortable with the loss of control over his emotions, but in this instance and others similar, the reader sees the father lose control and demonstrate some vulnerability. More relevant perhaps than the rage the father exhibits is Glotfelty’s subtle point that “daughter Terry” always remains calm and irritatingly collected. Both responses to Diane Tempest’s death seem slightly exaggerated but truthful.

At the end of her article Glotfelty writes:

Williams is right to open up natural history to gender issues. But I wish that invoking gender were done in the spirit of bridging differences rather than exaggerating them. I hope that in *Refuge: The Next Generation* the men of the world will also be invited to dance around that blazing fire. (297)

It seems that Glotfelty ignores two important aspects of Williams's upbringing when she makes this statement. First, the book does heavily depict men and women's differences as sexlinked, but considering Williams is writing from a patriarchal background, it seems that Williams often, albeit subtly, is reaching for a connection between the sexes. The overall tone stresses the faults of the system within the Mormon Church. Anderson writes, "And question she [Williams] does, in a number of subtle and not-so-subtle challenges to her religion throughout *Refuge*. She makes several references to the exclusion of women from the Mormon priesthood" (980). Like the criticism Williams has of men, her criticism of the church is ambiguous: "Yet at the same time she cannot help but affirm her Mormon background and faith. She acknowledges her debt to the magical worldview and the belief in personal revelation and individual authority at the root of Mormon religion" (980). It is clear that Williams finds fault with men's treatment of women, but there is little doubt also that she loves the men in her life, and they served as mentors for her in her love of the landscape and other valuable life lessons.

Williams also frequently highlights her father's love and admiration for her mother. One demonstration of John Tempest's admiration of his wife and her independence occurs when, close to the end of her life, he recalls:

"Diane stood up in the middle of the restaurant, pulled the tablecloth off the table and said, 'That's it! I am no longer your slave! From now on, I'm doing what pleases me!' That was the beginning of women's liberation in this family!" (206)

Considering this story is closely followed by a prayer in which the women of the family are not permitted to participate, it can reasonably be argued that Williams included this story to underscore her father's limited perception of "women's liberation." It can also

be argued that the men in Williams's life, while she does not consider them faultless, are less to blame for the oppression of women than the rituals of the Mormon religion. In addition, Williams's father's actions often leave the reader feeling torn. The admiration and love Williams felt towards him and that he felt toward Diane Tempest are as present as is his rage. In addition John Henry Tempest is the first person Williams mentions in her acknowledgements, saying, "First and foremost I must honor my father, John Henry Tempest, III. He is a proud and private man. I thank him for understanding. He read each draft, edited and discussed [. . .]" (291). Her father's involvement in the narrative indicates, despite his involvement and acceptance of Mormon traditions, that this narrative was created in "spirit of bridging differences" between the sexes.

The second oversight of Glotfelty lies in her declaration that Williams should invite the men to "dance around the blazing circle of fire." Although that probably would be best, it seems dismissive to criticize Williams when the women are not invited into the men's circles. The reader knows this point from one of the last requests her mother makes: "Dad gave mother a blessing, to which she added—as the men in the family gathered around her to place their hands on her head—"Someday, I hope Terry and Ann and my granddaughters will be able to stand in the circle"" (Williams 207).

Perhaps the attitude that unless the men invite the women into their prayer circle the women should not be asked to do the same is juvenile and serves only to perpetuate the divergence, but the women have been excluded for hundreds of years in Mormonism rituals. It seems reasonable that the women would not want to immediately incorporate the men into a sphere where they have power. Glotfelty's article is important and points to a direction toward which one hopes ecofeminism is progressing, but as with many of

the ecocritical discourses present in *Refuge*, Williams has provided a necessary springboard, not a solution, for future environmental writers and historians with which to leap from the foundation of the many talented, yet overdone, followers of Thoreauvian tradition. Glotfelty is not incorrect in her conclusions, and she correctly uses her analysis of *Refuge* to begin a needed dialogue concerning feminist and ecofeminist thought; but it would have better served her argument to discuss Williams's portrayal of men as not just raging and sexist but also as people Williams loved and admired. Williams writes a text that fits with the traditional definition of ecofeminism. Glotfelty hopes that critics, scholars, and writers can one day progress beyond this dualism. In the next section, I will examine how Williams follows the traditional, and by traditional I mean still relatively new, definitions of ecofeminism, which often make a correlation between the subjugation of women and land.

In the first chapter of *Refuge* the narrator and her friend are driving to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge to see the burrowing owls by which the narrator says she measures her life. She explains that they alert her to the "regularities of the land." However, when she and her friend arrive at the "distinctive" underground mounds where the owls usually make their homes, the narrator is devastated to find the land flattened. A few minutes later a blue pickup truck pulls up beside the women and the men in the truck tell the women that the "boys from highway department came and graveled the place....those ground owls are messy little bastards anyway." -According to Mitchell, "These men are John Muir's dark twins: failing to see the landscape as a part of themselves, they are incapable of imagining any other relationship to that landscape than one of manipulation" (5). Later in the chapter the narrator sees the men again and flips

them off. Williams's decision to retell this scene in the beginning of the book foreshadows her determination to disobey Mormon leaders' preference to remain quiet regarding certain government policies while the women in Williams's family suffer quietly. This chapter is framed from the beginning with an ecofeminist philosophy demonstrated by the following conversation between the narrator and her friend:

"Many men have forgotten what they are connected to," my friend added.

"Subjugation of women and nature may be a loss of intimacy within themselves."

She paused, and then looked at me.

"Do you feel rage?"

I didn't answer for some time

"I feel sadness. I feel powerless at times. But I'm not certain what rage really means."

[. . .] "Do you?" I asked

[. . .] "Yes. Perhaps your generation, one behind mine, is a step removed from the pain" (10-11). [ellipses?]

The women's conversation summarizes many ecofeminists' philosophy. The importance of the women's bonds and the strength Williams's draws from them as well as from the land are highlighted in simple lines like "One night, a full moon watched over me like a mother" (119). This point underscores the loss Williams is experiencing with the death of the women in her family. The strength and instruction Williams received from the females in her family are compounded by the loss she suffers when she becomes the matriarch of her family at age thirty-four (Williams 3). The quiet suffering and the instruction Williams received from her mother and the other women in her family lead

Williams to believe that the “price of obedience was too high.” Writing *Refuge* provided necessary healing for Williams, but it also was a declaration to the public that, despite the qualms the church or the men in her community might have, the women of the community needed to bond together against subjugation and certain government actions.

Anderson explains:

Woven through the book [*Refuge*] like a silver cord is the spiritual instruction Terry receives from her female elders as they live and die. All three grapple with what it means to cultivate a self in a culture bent on repression of women and women's values.... Terry had, in writing *Refuge*, made an open declaration of her challenge to the social and religious orthodoxies she was raised with. (Anderson 8)

The women in Williams’s family taught Williams how to cultivate “a self,” and in addition to her ability to write, Williams used that sense of self to retaliate against the government’s actions. The toxification of the land where Williams and her family resided provides a text from which ecocritics can discuss the effects of environmental injustice.

In the end of *Refuge* Williams tells the reader of the social injustice her family suffered. “Above ground atomic testing in Nevada took place from January 1951 through July 1962.” Williams describes seeing one of the bombs go off and how it left “an eerie pink glow” and “within a few minutes a light ash was raining on the car she and her family were in” (282-283). Williams and her family are what became known as downwinders--those exposed to the fallout of atomic bomb tests. Ecofeminists, like Williams, have been champions of environmental justice. According to Buell:

During the past decade some ecofeminists have been among the leaders in a broader initiative to push environmental criticism toward substantive engagement with issues of environmental welfare and equity of more pressing concern to the impoverished and socially marginalized: to the landscapes of urbanization, racism, poverty, and toxification; and to the voices of witness and victims of environmental injustice. (112)

Until the end of the book, the reader does not know that Williams and her family have been victims of nuclear fallout. Williams attributes the death of her mother and soon after her grandmother to toxification of the land—nuclear fallout. This revelation paves the way for Williams to explain how she has changed and that the price of obedience is too much. Williams tells the reader about a dream she had where she was protesting with other women victims of nuclear fallout. The women are mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, and they sing and dance around a fire to build up their strength. In the dream, the authorities are called to stop the women, and when they arrive, the reader sees how Williams has transformed herself from victim to fighter:

As one officer cinched the handcuffs around my wrists, another frisked my body.

She found a pen and a pad of paper tucked inside my left boot.

“And these?” she asked sternly.

”Weapons,” I replied.

Our eyes met. I smiled. She pulled the leg of my trousers back over my boot.

“Step forward, please,” she said as she took my arm. (290)

In this passage the reader sees not only how Williams has decided to fight by recording and publishing, but readers also recognize the camaraderie she feels exists between women in the fight against subjugation of women and the land.

Williams watched as seven women in her family died of cancer, and in writing *Refuge* she spoke against the government and disobeyed the Mormon belief that one “should not rock the boat,” as Williams writes in the epilogue of *Refuge*: “In Mormon culture, authority is respected, obedience is revered, independent thinking is not” (285). With the help of her family, Williams made public what the government had been hiding:

Again and again, the American public was told by its government, in spite of burns, blisters, and nausea, “It has been found that the tests may be conducted with adequate assurance of safety under conditions prevailing at the bombing reservations.” Assuaging public fears was simply a matter of public relations.

(*Refuge* 284)

To write a book about her mother's death and to be so open with personal matters is not something of which the Mormon culture approves, but the larger battle was the environmental injustice of the government. Orthodox Mormons, like Williams's father, contributed to the creation of this book, which is a story of the women in her family who suffered quietly. *Refuge* epitomizes what revisionist ecocritics of the '90s envisioned: a focus on connection and subject matter that pushes the boundaries of traditional nature writing, ecofeminism, and environmental justice. However, the wheels of theory move quickly, and today ecocritics encourage pushing the boundaries beyond nature writing and into the realms of fiction and poetry.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Lawrence Buell compares ecocriticism to feminist and black studies because he believes the lasting legacy of ecocriticism, like feminist and black studies, will be in “having made the case for serious attention to these domains of inquiry rather than in any radical critical methodology associated with them” (*Future* 130). From the onset of ecocriticism, one of the main purposes has been to capture the public’s attention in order to help save the environment. Different from some literary studies, like New Criticism and deconstruction, ecocriticism was born with intentions similar to gender and race studies and cannot claim ushering a methodological originality into the field of literary studies. For this reason and others, ecocritical essays and texts often begin by citing the similarities among gender, race, and environmental studies. For example, Glotfelty’s introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader* discusses how if one’s knowledge of the outside world were limited to major publications of the literary profession, one could easily discern that race, class, and gender were of great significance in the twentieth century, “but you would never suspect that the earth’s life support systems were under stress” (qtd. in Glotfelty and Fromm xvi). Many in the literary profession, Glotfelty among them, criticized academia’s willingness to disregard ecocriticism because some academics believed that the natural world was an area of study for science, not the humanities.

Attention to the environment has been late in coming; it has always been tomorrow's problem. Today, however, ecocritics are not only trying to draw attention to the environment but also to the urgency that they believe is necessary, illustrated in phrases like Glotfelty's: "the earth's life support systems. . . under stress." The urgency also contributes to the desire to move away from criticism directed at academia. As Buell says:

[T]he path of environmental criticism tends to signal a reformist or transformationist aspiration in light of which the very thought of casting one's thoughts into an academic discourse directed chiefly toward other academics may seem dispiriting. That is doubtless a key reason why ecocritics often turn to what Slovic (1994) and others have called narrative scholarship, which casts critical analysis in the form of autobiographical narrative. (*Future* 132)

Indeed, much, if not most, of this thesis has drawn from theories extracted from narrative scholarship. The autobiographical nature of the narratives does something else important: it takes the scholarship outside the walls of academia and into the physical world. Of course, for authors like Abbey and Thoreau the physical world was temporary, making it easy to celebrate the beauty and challenges nature presented. This case is not the same for Williams, for whom the every day aspects of her life become the subjects that help shape her environmental and cultural philosophies, not from an idealized version of a lifestyle lived in for a year or six months. The urgency to create a legitimate field and garner the public's attention has contributed to the introduction of less idealized and more personal approaches to ecocriticism.

One result of the lack of a methodology is that, as Buell says, “Environmental criticism in literary studies has, thus far, not changed literary studies or environmental humanities so much as it has been absorbed (*Future* 130). The lack of methodology is not the only reason environmental criticism has not radically changed literary studies. Another reason for the absorption is that for first and second-wave critics the conceptual originality has been in “foregrounding neglected (sub) genres like nature writing” (*Future* 131). Ecocritics examine these “environmental subtexts through historical and critical analysis that employ ready-to-hand analytical tools of the trade” (*Future* 130). Buell continues with this discussion to say that these are “far from being trivial achievements” (*Future* 130). As a result of the lack of unity in the long history of American environmental writing and philosophy, the extracting, study, and merging of these areas was more important than immediately developing a new method of critical inquiry and or theory. However, the momentum ecocriticism gathered in the 1990s seems to have slowed, perhaps because many ecocritics have continued to rely on the ready-to-hand analytical tools. It is not to say that there have been no new analyses in ecocriticism. Books like Krista Comer’s *Landscapes of the New West* (1999) use the older analytical tools but apply them in a revitalized manner. Comer examines what she terms new regionalism through the lens of postmodernism. According to Comer one of the defining problems of postmodern culture is “the subject’s inability to locate itself,” (3) but new regionalism would return the subject’s ability to find oneself and “claim some ‘real place,’ some permanent and trustworthy identity” (3). Comer sees new regionalism as a way to solve the subject’s inability to define oneself. It must be *new*

regionalism because in the 1960s and 70s regionalism came to be associated with obsolete American ideals.

In his essay, "Blues in the Green: Ecocriticism under Critique" Michael P. Cohen lists place and region as one of three areas that will energize the future of environmental criticism. His prediction corresponds with Comer's idea that regionalist discourse, particularly western regionalism, could rescue ecocriticism's inability to find and claim some "real place" (Comer 3). According to Comer, regionalism, in the wake of the 1960s and 70s, was disparaged but simultaneously gained momentum:

In the onslaught of the 1960s, regionalism of the 1920-40s variety, like the idea of the national mind, is rendered intellectually obsolete, considered inevitably productive of conservative literary nationalism. To speak of regionalism is to speak of small matters, and smallness, in the midst of "deep water" or oceanic revolution, never seemed more beside the point. So, how then are we to understand the fact that in this same period a new regionalist movement is taking shape in American political culture, among writers and artists and on college and university campuses? (1)

Comer suggests that the new regionalism is "born out of, and responds, to postmodernism" (2). According to Comer, through the lens of postmodernism, new regionalism, after the end of the Reagan era, could regain its momentum through a new national identity not solely defined by the white male. Comer asserts that America's national identity is--and always has been--directly related to the western regional identity.

Postmodernism provides a way for those who did not fit into the national identity to tell their story. Comer says, "There exists a radicalized and gendered pattern as well

as a subregionalist pattern as to who rejects postmodern narrative strategies and who indeed *needs* those strategies in order to tell their own versions of western stories” (4). Gender, race, and other movements in the 60s and 70s revived the national identity and with it the pastoral and regional writings seemed parochial and limited. That does not mean that regional scholarship cannot be redefined. By redefining western regionalism through feminism and postmodernism, Comer demonstrates how western regional literature and criticism has changed from anti-modern and masculine imagery into a multiracial and urban landscape. Perhaps more importantly, Comer throws aside the ready-made-tools and uses a novel approach.

Comer says, “Certainly one reads plenty about Silko, Kingston, Erdrich, and Cisneros, but analysis generally framed through the categories of race or ethnicity rather than through western regionality in any geographic, historic, or imaginative sense” (8). By framing her analysis through western regionalism some might say Comer is attempting “a kind of colonizing act” and that the “Wild West or conquest stories it is assumed to mimic, offers little relevance to the literature concerns of contemporary people of color (9). However, Comer addresses this concern when she says:

But to continue to concede the category of region altogether, to consent to its remaining a “white thing,” is in my view an error of progressive political strategy, not to mention a misreading of the cultural phenomenon. Region, like any category in American critical thought, depends on figurations of people of color and/or women for its coherence and intelligibility *as* a “white man’s discourse.” Exposing the racial and gendered assumptions that comprise the discourse and

make it politically meaningful and oppressive may be relevant not least, but rather most of all, to women and/or peoples of color. (9)

Comer addresses theories that came about in the wake of the 60s and 70s and builds on them. She challenges aspects of ecocriticism that have begun to change but still embraces certain idealistic ideas. With regard to the representation of nature in literary texts, she says:

One of the most conspicuous indicators of this half-commitment to landscape as discourse is the pervasive association of landscape with the sacred and the transcendental. Claims for landscape *as* nature and nature as the realm of the sacred suggest not simply that an extrarepresentational, nonhuman world exists in nature (a claim I support), but that the world can redeem the ills that plague human society (a claim I question). Nature as a social savior? (12)

Comer addresses many of the half-commitments ecocritics are making. While they have moved away from the landscape as a savior, that notion still seems to permeate the studies which may account for why ecocriticism, according to Cohen, is in danger of falling into “[T]he complacency of the praise songs and the denial of real contesting positions will mean slow stagnation” (23). Cohen’s criticism echoes the half-commitment that ecocriticism seems to possess in other areas such as its acceptance of anthropocentrism.

As much as revisionist critics have encouraged taking a softer position on anthropocentrism, they seem to reject it by promoting interdisciplinary studies. I do not promote excluding interdisciplinarity, which is a powerful idea for ecocriticism, but I believe ecocritics should more fully embrace what the very nature of the field of

humanities demands—anthropocentrism. As Cohen says, “[b]ecause literature is about human expression, all theories of representation must be about human strategies and therefore ‘anthropocentric’” (26). Incorporating other disciplines into literary study should be encouraged, but ecocriticism as a literary approach should continue to emphasize its human—anthropocentric—connection. Literature’s basic appeal is that it helps readers understand something about themselves, and people want to know about themselves. If ecocritics want to change the world, then ecocriticism needs the attention of the world. Anthropocentrism is the most powerful tool in the humanities toolbox—the interest of the people.

Cohen quotes Leo Marx in his article “Blues in the Green: Ecocriticism Under Critique,” as criticizing ecocentrism: “Ecocentrists are the Puritans of today’s environmental movement[ check punctuation here] they are critical of anyone. . . who assumes that the chief reason for protecting the environments is its usefulness to human beings” (26). Cohen discusses how critics like Glenn Feldman and John Elder have tried to move away from anti-anthropocentrism: “Love’s *Practical Ecocriticism* . . . describes his shift away from an ‘aggressive anti-anthropocentrism’ characterizing his earlier critical writings, that needs to make way for an exploration of ‘what it means to be human’” (26). Ironically, what it means to be human to Love is discussed in scientific terms in *Practical Ecocriticism*.

In her review of *Practical Ecocriticism* Tara Lynne Ciapp agrees with Love that scientific findings should promote environmental concerns, but she disagrees with Love’s statement that “the sciences produce knowledge that is not ‘just’ another cultural construction, but that is fundamentally real in some sense that other knowledge is not”

(1). Ciapp criticizes Love because his underlying premise is that the scientific knowledge should be treated less critically than the knowledge produced in the field of humanities (Ciapp 1). Ciapp rightly notes that “[t]he irony is that it is the humanities, not the sciences, that ought to provide us with normative guidance” (1). Although interdisciplinary studies add to ecocritical approaches, interdisciplinarity’s gains should not come with the limiting conclusion that humanistic knowledge is not “real” knowledge. Perhaps, ecocriticism should not be asking what it means to be human but instead the essential anthropocentric question, what nature means to humans. This question would lead to the answer ecocritics want: nature means everything to humans because it means survival. There exists an inherent dilemma in trying to develop a theory that shifts from humans as center stage to nature without critiquing humanities’ anthropocentric tendencies. I admit it is a careful balance that must be obtained, but to only half-commit to the humanities’ fundamental study of humankind and to endorse science as the more knowledgeable field of study is to seriously damage literary studies. Ecocriticism should be drawing from the strengths of the humanities and introducing new methods of examination in much the same way Krista Comer has advocated. In this sense, ecocriticism needs to evolve by returning to its foundation of knowledge.

One of the other ways Cohen feels ecocriticism needs to evolve is to move away from narrative scholarship for the following reasons:

- 1) Such books are always turning into travelogue.
- 2) Discussion of environmental topics like fast food and organic farming are based more on journalistic accounts than on rigorous scholarship, and are in danger of being clichéd.

3) Critical prose sometimes shifts to lessons on “the kind of life worth living” that are testimonial. (22)

While I strongly agree that these are aspects of narrative scholarship, I also believe that, if narrative scholarship is not the sole form of analysis ecocriticism offers, then it offers a valuable tool to ecocriticism because it moves beyond the walls of academia and because it provides insight into the long history of environmental philosophy in the United States. Before the 1990s, most environmental writers/ecocritics provided theory in the form of narrative scholarship. Given this consideration, I also believe that ecocriticism needs to proceed with caution and incorporate other texts in order to avoid the dangers Cohen lists, particularly the suicidal shift to preaching sermons to the public about “the kind of life worth living.” Because I believe strongly that Cohen’s argument is valid, as part of the conclusion to this thesis, I would like to provide two brief ecocritical readings from Southwestern fiction and suggest two ecocritical methods that could be applied to the play *The Oldest Living Graduate* and the poems of Naomi Shihab Nye. By examining other genres besides nonfiction nature writing and by evaluating how a literary work presents nature, an ecocritic can help readers understand how literature affects human psychology. Like other ecocritics, I do not believe that nature is a social savior, but I believe it speaks to the rhythms of humans’ lives and can help enlighten us about our own existence if only in the parallels we share with it: such as life and death.

As demonstrated in the first chapter, the field of ecocriticism is one with a long past and burgeoning present. I have discussed the development of ecocriticism in order to illustrate why it is where it is today and the directions it is heading. In addition, I covered some of the most discussed discourses in the field: ecofeminism, environmental

justice, and revisionists' objective to seek connections between nature and civilization rather than attempt to draw distinct binaries. One of the most common pushes today is for ecocriticism to move beyond the realm of nature writing. Considering this thesis' focus has been on nature writing texts, it seems a valuable pursuit to provide a quick look at how ecocritics are applying ecocritical theories to texts where nature is not already central. Because I have discussed at length how the pastoral vision has helped shape American identity, I have chosen first to examine two texts that illustrate, first, how America's pastoral vision has long been embedded into works of fiction and secondly, how the American identity is changing with the loss of open landscapes across the country.

Because identity is psychological, I rely on Scott Slovic's theory as a loose framework to discuss these texts. One way to look at these works of fiction is through the framework Slovic provides for nature writers in his essay "Nature Writing and Environmental Psychology." Although these works are not nature writing, it is apparent when reading closely how strongly nature affects the psychology of the characters in the books. In the collected short stories of *The Old Order*, Katherine Ann Porter uses nature as means to "explore both the importance of knowing nature and how such knowledge can be attained" (Dixon 153). In *All the Pretty Horses*, there is a melancholy that permeates all aspects of the book that directly correlates with the changing American Western landscape. Americans' loss of the pastoral ideal instigates an identity crisis for the main character, John Grady. In *Seeking Awareness in Nature Writers*, Scott Slovic says:

Nature writers are constantly probing, traumatizing thrilling, and soothing their own minds—and by extension those of their readers—in quest not only of consciousness itself, but of an *understanding* of consciousness. [. . .] By confronting “face to face” the separate realm of nature, by becoming aware of its “otherness,” the writer implicitly becomes more deeply aware of his or her own dimensions, limitations of form and understanding, and processes of grappling with the unknown. (352)

As ecocriticism moves forward one can apply theories, like Slovic’s, beyond the realm of nature writing. In his essay, “Knowing Nature,” Terrell F. Dixon examines two stories by Katherine Ann Porter. His decision to examine Porter’s fiction speaks of the boundless areas of exploration in ecocriticism. Dixon opens his discussion of Porter with the following insights on ecocriticism:

Ecocriticism’s expansion of the boundaries of what is considered to be nature literature is starting to include not only the study of such contemporary fiction as Charles Frazier’s *Cold Mountain* or Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* but also of significant earlier American fiction about nature. From this perspective, it is clear that Porter’s nature stories form part of a significant tradition of American ecofiction. (151)

Dixon points out that many ecocritics are returning to significant early American fiction. It is interesting to note that in early fiction the American pastoral identity is still very strong, but Cormac McCarthy’s, *All the Pretty Horses*, written in 1992, revolves around the passing of American pastoral identity.

In *The Old Order*, nature is not just a reflection of the American identity but a reflection of the time period the characters are living. The time period affects the psychology of the individual, and this point is highlighted in the images of nature Porter chooses. *The Old Order* is a book of loosely connected short stories that moves from one generation to the next. In the collection Porter includes stories that occur anywhere between the Grandmother's Victorian generation and the modern generation, early 1900s, of the granddaughter, Miranda. Miranda experiences several initiations into the modern world that seem to contrast sharply with the old order from which the Grandmother hails. In many of these stories the presence or absence of nature serves to highlight the contrast between the two generations.

For Grandmother, nature underscores the apparent simplicity of her life; nature is presented in soft orderly images, whereas for Miranda, nature often initiates a lesson of life that is sometimes unsettling. The contrast between the initiations Miranda receives in the natural world and those in society serve to underscore how nature has long been used as a trope in which one becomes more deeply aware of his or her own dimensions through nature, not just in nature writing texts, but in all genres. As unsettling as the discoveries in nature can be, they usually serve to provide some enlightenment about oneself, while initiations in society are often more confusing and chaotic than enlightening. In fact, it is through the encounters with nature that one learns to grapple with the unknown dimensions of society.

In *The Old Order*, Porter begins with stories about the Victorian generation. These stories are simple and based on an old way of life that fades as one progresses through the stories and moves farther away from the natural. The first story in the *Old*

*Order*, “The Source,” begins with the Grandmother getting ready to go out to the country: “Once a year in early summer, after school was closed and the children were to be sent to the farm, the Grandmother began to long for the old country” (1). Grandmother’s summer retreats to the country give her life a balance and provide the rejuvenation that one often sees in nature writers. Dixon says:

Once we begin to consider her [Porter’s] fiction from an ecocritical viewpoint, it is abundantly clear that Porter’s literary imagination is deeply involved in the natural world. The short stories are filled with passages where she uses a nature metaphor or simile to sketch a place, to define a relationship, or—most frequently—to present a character with vividness and efficiency. (151)

Porter uses nature both to present Grandmother with vividness and efficiency and also to define a relationship. The balance Grandmother finds in life foreshadows the chaos found in stories like “The Circus” where nature is absent. In *The Future of Environmental Criticism* Buell paraphrases Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City*, when he explains the escalator-effect: “pastoral nostalgia that Raymond Williams traces in English back to Anglo-Saxon times, each generation recalling the last as having lived in closer intimacy with our natural surroundings” (75). For Porter, nature helps to create a world seemingly without doubt and ambiguity in the older generations. Most of the descriptions involving nature emphasize the order and simplicity of the era, “So they talked about . . . planting a new hedge of rose bushes, about the new ways of preserving fruit and vegetables” (11). The underlying disorder that existed during the Victorian era rarely surfaces, but Porter does hint at the disorder by juxtaposing the beauty of the natural scenes with occasional hints at disorder, “Summer, in many ways, so desirable a

season, has its drawbacks” (9). The drawbacks of summer are that the children run wild and the “Negroes” love to lie around under the shade. The muted images of nature and soft hints of disarray reflect the Victorian time period, and as the reader moves into the chapters concerning the modern period, nature becomes absent or more intensely felt.

As the texts move beyond the Victorian era, the readers follow the character Miranda as she experiences a number of different initiations into the world. In “The Circus,” the first story set in the modern world, lines that present images of nature such as, “a great iron washpot and stretch in the sun,”(4) and “In the summer the women sat under the mingled trees of the side garden,” disappear. The reader is quickly immersed into chaotic imagery and a world without nature.

The bizarreness of the circus frightens Miranda, and she cries until Dicey, the family’s help, is forced to take her home. The unnatural atmosphere of the circus contrasts with the chapters before that, despite the tragedy woven within, seemed to have a stronger sense of order. At the circus Miranda is frightened by the “flaring lights” and the “chalk-white” face of the clown. Later at home, her siblings tell Miranda she missed the “trained white goats that danced . . . a baby elephant that crossed his feet” (38) and other unnatural occurrences. However, it is not only Miranda who dislikes the circus, but the Grandmother, who went only because it was a family reunion, also disapproves. The modern world is disorienting with its animals who act like humans and the humans who laugh at men with “chalk-white” faces and other strange physical features. In the story “The Grave,” Miranda experiences a different sort of initiation than the one in “The Circus.” In this short story, Miranda becomes in tune with some of the rhythms of life. Speaking of two other stories by Porter, Dixon says:

In these stories, what sets in motion the crucial act of knowing nature is also the element that consistently drives traditional non-fiction nature writing: the nature walk. From Thoreau's classic final essay "Walking" to the work of such contemporaries as Annie Dillard, John Hanson Mitchell, and Robert Michael Pyle, it is most often the nature walk, carried out with appropriate attention and respect, that forms the heart of the narrative. (155)

In "The Grave" Miranda and her brother's walk into the woods could be considered the nature walk that is the heart of the narrative. When Paul, Miranda's older brother, shoots a pregnant rabbit, Miranda is given a lesson on life and death. "The revelation is profound" (13) and a bit unsettling, but as Porter writes, "she wanted most deeply to see and to know. Having seen, she felt at once as if she had known all along" (54). Miranda has known all along because life and death are natural, but the "nature walk" has allowed her to explore and discover this truth, which ultimately enlightens her to her own existence.

The lessons from the "The Circus" and "The Grave" are very different. In "The Grave" Miranda learns a lesson that is unsettling, but improves her dimension as a person. Through an encounter with nature, she gains a clearer knowledge of the rhythms of life. The clarity present in "The Grave" differs from in "The Circus" in which something Miranda expected to be fun turns out to be scary because, as S.H. Poss says, "[Miranda] sees instantly the truth about the clowns, their sad comedy, their cynical despair in playing the role of scapegoat. She sees the high-wire act as a kind of sacrificial rite which fills the crowd with savage delight" (Poss 22). "The Circus" is an initiation into an aspect of society that Miranda would rather not know. In "The Grave" the

knowledge may be unsettling, but it tunes her into something she wants to learn more about because it provides insight for her. The initiation contrasts with “The Circus” in which she fears society’s desire to make the clowns their scapegoat and to observe animals’ unnatural behavior. Miranda’s experience with nature illustrates how one might apply Slovic’s theory in a text outside the nature writing genre. In Porter’s short stories, the characters become more aware of their own dimensions and consciousness.

In Cormac McCarthy’s *All the Pretty Horses*, the main character, John Grady Cole, does not seek awareness from the natural, like Miranda, but instead suffers from an identity crisis with the changing landscape of the Southwest. As civilization moves closer and closer onto his landscape, John Grady loses his dimensions.

From the opening scene McCarthy sets a melancholy mood. John Grady has just walked into home for the viewing of his grandfather’s body. The fact that the novel begins with death foreshadows the rest of the novel: longing for the past and resistance to the future permeates *All the Pretty Horses*. As John Grady stares at his grandfather, a train barrels in from the east:

As he turned to go he heard the train. It came boring out of the east like some ribald satellite of the coming sun howling and bellowing in the distance and the long light of the head lamp running through the tangled mesquite brakes and creating out of night the endless fenceline down the dead straight right of the way and sucking it back again wire and post mile on mile into the darkness after where the boilersmoke disbanded slowly along the faint new horizon and the sound came lagging and he stood holding his hat in his hands in the passing ground

shudder watching it till it was gone. Then he turned and went back to the house.  
(McCarthy 3-4)

In his book *The Pastoral Vision of Cormac McCarthy*, Georg Guillemin discusses this scene in relation to Leo Marx's book *The Machine in the Garden*. "[T]he sudden intrusion of the machine upon the native landscape evokes feelings of dislocation and anxiety. It reactivates the alienation that had initially provoked the pastoral impulse (Marx qtd. in Guillemin 127). The industrial East is making its way across the borders and into the open lands of the West. From this passage the reader understands that the setting of this novel is a time period when the headlights of the train can create the endless fenceline. The Western land is still undeveloped compared to the East, where the train comes from. Marx in fact illustrates the sudden intrusion of the machine upon native landscape with a train when he says, "no image caught the mood better than the familiar Currier and Ives prints of locomotives hurtling across the western prairie" (Marx qtd. in Guillemin 127).

Unlike in *All the Pretty Horses*, Marx says that most people learn to live with the machine; they adjust and immerse themselves into society. However, in *All the Pretty Horses*, John Grady does not adjust. McCarthy "cultivates the machine motif in order to dramatize the pastoral protagonists' continued alienation and melancholia as terminal, as being connected to the abjection of nature itself" (Guillemin 127).

The novel's beginning with death and the machine barreling in from the East is also indicative of the change that invokes melancholia in John Grady. According to Guillemin, until one understands John Grady's melancholia in relation to the history of the land, the ever pervading melancholy seems un-proportional to his problems, although

he has plenty, and his age. Commenting on John Grady and a character from another of McCarthy's books, Guillemín says, "[T]he characters' melancholy tales read like pieces of an allegorical palimpsest that ultimately serves to place pastoral nostalgia in context with a melancholy view of history" (116). They are characters who are acting out the American pastoral dream while aware that it no longer exists:

At the hour he'd always choose when the shadows were long and the ancient road was shaped before him in the rose and canted light like a dream of the past where the painted ponies and the riders of the lost nation came down out of the north with their faces chalked. (McCarthy 5)

John Grady's melancholy for the past is not unusual, but his unwillingness to "check his pastoral impulse" (Guillemín 124) differs from traditional pastoral works. In Mexico John Grady briefly finds the pastoral idyll again, but later witnesses Blevins' death, a younger boy who tagged along to Mexico, and is thrown into jail. At that point, Guillemín says, he should have taken Rawlins' cue to reintegrate himself into society, but Grady "commits himself to it [the wild] for good when retracing his steps back into the Mexican wilderness" (124). Analyses like Guillemín's and texts like McCarthy's are evidence of the passing of an American identity defined by the open landscapes. Theories like Slovic's can help to define a new American identity by examining the psychological relation Americans have and have had to the wilderness illustrated in poetry, fiction, drama and non-fiction nature writing.

In the play, *The Oldest Living Graduate*, readers see how the main character, Colonel Kinkaid, now confined to a wheelchair, attempts to resist the changing times and the changing American landscape. An ecocritical reading of this text could be performed

in many different ways, but two that the play lends itself easily to are the psychological effects the changing landscape has on both the characters and the American psyche. The barren landscape of the town reflects the psychological spirit of the two main characters in this play: Colonel Kinkaid and his son, Floyd. The play begins with a description of “The Place,” setting, which reads, “Bradyville, Texas, population 6,000, a small, dead West Texas town in the middle of a big, dead West Texas prairie between Abilene and San Angelo. The new highway has bypassed it and now the world is trying to” (Jones 9). In this dead West Texas town, Colonel Kinkaid owns some property on a lake. This property has sentimental value to him, but his son wants the land to build estates. In the struggle over the land the reader see one man, Colonel Kinkaid trying to hold onto the American ideal of open land and the psychological comforts the openness of the land provide for him. In contrast Floyd sees the land as a means to “progress” and prove himself. Since the loss of Colonel Kinkaid’s favorite son in WWII, Franklin, Floyd has been trying to prove himself to his father. The play’s focus on the land and how it affects the readers psychologically and emotionally provides rich ground for ecocritical exploration.

In addition, to fiction and drama there is an abundance of poetry that would lend itself easily to an ecocritical reading. Naomi Shihab Nye comes to mind. Poems like “Points of Rock, Texas” demonstrate how humanity is connected to the physical world but also how fleeting and young individuals are in comparison to geological structures: “If we have been here since whatever blow it was/toppled these boulders,/if we are brief as lightening in the arrow-shaped wisp of cloud” (46). Other poems like “The Desert” can be viewed through an ecofeminist lens: “In the beginning the desert/was the ashes of

a woman” (46). Writers like Nye open up many opportunities for ecocritics. One could also compare her poetry from the Middle East with that from Texas and explore questions about differences in landscape and how these differences affect humans: How do different landscapes affect us and the culture of a place? How do people in different regions interact with a landscape? The possibilities seem endless, not just with Shihab, but with the rich and only recently explored terrain of genres outside of non-fiction nature writing.

The analysis of the two texts and suggestion of other readings is meant to illustrate ecocriticism’s exciting expansion and also to highlight an important ideal that revisionist ecocriticism has helped to develop: the identity of America today as more urban than pastoral. The underlying premise in the above analyses is how the urban environment and natural environments affect the main characters psychologically. Miranda experienced chaos and a loss of self in society while in nature she understood herself better. John Grady had an identity crisis as the East encroached upon his open landscape. This is an area in revisionist ecocriticism that continues to grow and is an important step in helping to define the new identity of America. Comer states, “America needs a new program of national self-definition more than it has since the American century began” (7). The desire for a new national self-definition is also evident in Floyd’s character, but instead of longing for the open landscape, he embraces the idea of “progress.” In addition Nye’s work underscores another important element of revisionist ecocriticism: the push to expand our boundaries. In today’s society, people are all nationalities and are familiar with all different landscapes. As Comer tells her readers, regionalism means something very different than it did thirty years ago. Nye underscores

this point with her familiarity and love of different regions. Revisionist critics like Comer are helping to characterize America's new identity by including chapters like, "Urbanscapes in the Golden Land: California as Western Continuum" in which she writes:

In this critical canon [western regionalism], landscape rarely signifies city trees, urban public beaches, crowded metropolitan parks, or desert scenery observed from an air-conditioned car speeding down the freeway. Instead, critics favor relatively unpeopled expanses of prairie [. . .]" (62)

Critical works such as Comer's are helping to redefine and expand the genres of texts that ecocritics examine. However, as a result of the growing field of ecocriticism, ecocritics are in a position of becoming overwhelmed and less able to analyze texts without first prefacing their works with an explanation of which approach, under the ecocritical subject heading, they are applying to their texts.

As summarized in this thesis, the field of ecocriticism can be envisioned as being a continuum loosely divided into classes: first-wave ecocriticism and revisionist ecocriticism. Buell defined first-wave and revisionist ecocriticism in *The Future of Ecocriticism* but simultaneously said that ecocriticism has not yet developed a particular methodology for examining texts. However, I think a methodology could be developed under the broad spectrums of first-wave and revisionist thought. The clearest way for me to discuss such a methodology being implemented is in a classroom.

In a class emphasizing the first-wave, one could study writers such as Thoreau and Abbey, who while very different base their writing on an ideal that was created by the first European immigrants, the idea of nature as palliative, nurturing, and the

touchstone of restoration. Thoreau is the archetype of first-wave ecocritics with his retreat to Walden Pond. Abbey, too as a first-wave ecocritic, demonstrates the power of this idea but mourns the passing of wide open spaces.

In the second-wave or revisionist class, students could study nature writers like Terry Tempest Williams, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Sandra Cisneros whose writings demonstrate a fractured, but more truthful, American landscape in which most children, like Sandra Cisneros, grow up climbing concrete stairs more often than branches of trees. This more accurate landscape is a multiracial world that includes the stories of men *and* women and highlights the connections between culture and nature. Once the students are aware of both first-wave and revisionist theories, they can approach texts beyond strictly narrative scholarship and discuss the different environmental philosophies demonstrated in all different genres: for example, if a class were focusing on western studies students might look at writers like Larry McMurtry, Leslie Marmon Silko, Sara Bird, and Stephen Harrigan.

Considering Porter and McCarthy in the context of academic tutelage, one might discuss how Porter demonstrates both first-wave and revisionist ideals through her characters. Porter provides a view of first-wave conceptualization through the grandmother with her discussion of living off the land and her anxiety to get back to the country for the summer and away from the town. Additionally, because she is a woman during the Victorian era, her time in the country is not spent in solitaire, but tending to the children. In *All the Pretty Horses*, John Grady embodies first-wave ideals, his identity in fact depends on those ideals, but his refusal to return to society after he ventures into the wild demonstrates a revisionist ideal in that as Comer says, “the subject is unable to

locate himself.” The first topic of discussion for these classes would have to be in a framework of postmodernism; students would have to understand that there are trends to be identified within these categories, but that the categories overlap. If this is the case, then what purpose does such a division serve?

Such a class, or methodology of analyzing texts, would do two things. First, it would reinvigorate ecocriticism because with the burden of a long history and the lack of focus as a result of the many discourses developing under the revisionist ecocritical subject heading, the field is beginning to drag. Second, such a class would differentiate within ecocriticism two rather distinct ways of thinking and, therefore, make it easier to delve into other types of analysis: such as a regionalist analysis framed through a revisionist way of thinking. If the audience knows that the critic is discussing regionalism through the revisionist lens, then the audience understands the western landscape the critic is discussing is a multiracial, urban, male and female landscape. Revisionist theories may be diverse, but they can connect under one heading. By providing this demarcation ecocritics could provide a strong, yet flexible, focus to their studies and regain the momentum lost after the initial emergence of ecocriticism as a legitimate field of study in the 1990s.

In the most recent issue of *ISLE* Scott Slovic praised the contributors for the original and exciting material being produced and published. The articles ranged in topic from “familiar environmental writers—John Fowles, Rick Bass” (vi) to an ecocritical analysis of Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth*. Other books like *The Nature of Cities*, edited by Michael Bennett and David. W. Teague, includes essays such as “London Here and Now: Walking, Streets, and Urban Environments in English Poetry from Donne to

Gay” and “Boyz in the Wood: Urban Wilderness in American Cinema.” Ecocriticism is in an exciting place, and it needs space and time to develop. I agree with Buell that in the end ecocriticism will be about making the presence of the environment known, the way race and feminist theorists have drawn attention to these topics. However, in order to maintain the momentum, ecocriticism needs to accept its anthropocentric roots while still encouraging interdisciplinary studies that invigorate the field. It also needs to develop a methodology that will support in providing structure for the many discourses developing today and the past that continues to influence the dialogues occurring. I anticipate a long future ahead of ecocriticism and look forward to its continual growth and innovation in the field of literary scholarship.

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## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Diagram 1: Polar forces in American pastoralism

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Wilderness	Civilization
Nature	Culture
Wildness	Domestication
Re-creation	Recreation
Unconsciousness	Self-consciousness
Biocentrism	Anthropocentrism
Native American cultures	Euramerican culture
Traditional environmentalism	Radical environmentalism
Antimodernism	Progress

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<sup>2</sup> Not all nature writers who followed in the tradition of removing oneself from society ignored the ambiguity of the situation. John Graves also addresses the ambiguity in his narrative *Goodbye to a River* when he says:

Bitterness? No, ma'am. . . In a region like the Southwest, scorched to begin with, alternating between floods and drouths, its absorbent cities quadrupling their census every few years, electrical power and flood control and moisture conservation and water skiing are praiseworthy projects. (8)

Although Graves' narrative is not as didactic and overt in its polemic purpose as many pastoral nature writings, it does follow the tradition of pastoral ideology through Graves' rejection of civilization over nature. Graves embarks on a goodbye journey down the Brazos River before it is to be dammed. Like other pastoral writers, his encounters with

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civilization and people are few. He saves praise for the few he does encounter who live in cabins or houses removed from urban dwellings. Unlike Williams, who attempts to create connections among all except the government, one can sense the critique of society in Graves' writing, as exemplified in the final "noteworthy project" quoted above.

Graves' inclusion of water skiing, an activity many would be hard-pressed to describe as anything other than an enjoyable pastime, undermines the "noteworthiness" of the other "projects."

## VITA

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