The Organic Citizen: 
Reimagining Democratic Participation and Indigeneity 
in U.S. Late 19th and 20th Century Eco-Narratives 

by 

Melinda DiStefano 

Department of English 
Duke University 

Date:_______________________ 

Approved: 

___________________________ 
Priscilla Wald, Supervisor 

___________________________ 
Cathy Davidson 

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Thomas Ferraro 

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Ursula Heise 

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Orin Starn 

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of 
the requirements for the degree of Doctor 
of Philosophy in the Department of 
English in the Graduate School 
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ABSTRACT

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The Organic Citizen: Reimagining Democratic Participation and Indigeneity in U.S. Late 19th and 20th Century Eco-Narratives tracks a century-long trajectory in which environmentalist thought and citizen participation have been defined through each other. Beginning with the first stage of a formalized environmentalist movement (the conservationism of the 1890’s), and moving through the twentieth-century to the contemporary debate over genetically engineered food products, I look at particular moments that have shaped U.S. environmental policy to consider how the narratives that produce and surround these politics imagine what it means to be part of a citizenry, what it means to be politically excluded from this collective body, and what sort of possibilities these narratives put forth for individuals and communities to act.

The Organic Citizen investigates an underlying environmentalist sensibility that links texts and discourses from varied realms and disciplines – Indian reform, environmental policy, social reform, ecology, sociology and legislation. I contend that, taken together, these works narrate an ecological vision of national affiliation: a concept of the nation as an ecological, natural zone of interdependence and its citizens (or non-citizen inhabitants) as members of this environmentally-conceptualized nation. This shared narrative of natural collectivity gives rise to what I call an “organic citizen” – the literary-political figure of an individual imagined to be a natural member of an ecological national body. I show that this concept of eco-citizenship both informs and is informed by contemporaneous concepts of indigeneity (what it means to be native) and by the
actual political positioning of the American Indian in the U.S. citizenry throughout the century.

In five chapters, I argue that environmentalism is a site in which subjectivity is shaped, initially establishing modes of assimilative collectivity at the turn of the last century and later providing a realm in which the terms of subject affiliation may be analyzed and revised. I show how environmentalist discourse is profoundly connected to democratic practice and membership and how it formulates models of citizen collectivity. I contend that this discourse encompasses significantly more than a narrowly defined set of conservationist concerns for ecological entities, and can be used as a site of activism. Certain forms of stories—narratives that question these terms of national affiliation—expose the nuances of environmentalist thought. This type of storytelling offers a means through which environmentalist thought can become a realm of citizen engagement or activist possibility, opening access to and agency within a participatory democracy. An examination of this eco-narrative, I suggest, provides useful insights into how land use and rhetoric give definition to the way U.S. citizenship is socially imagined, legally adjudicated, and independently or communally practiced in a democratic system.

The first chapter examines the simultaneous emergence of wilderness narratives with the science of ecology and discourses concerned about national and geographical assimilation of communities and individuals of ethnic difference. I draw upon the writings of social reformers, particularly Jane Addams, ecologists Henry Chandler Cowles and Frederick Clements, and environmentalists John Muir and Gifford Pinchot.
Together, I argue they demonstrate how immigrant and impoverished subjects living in urban zones were rhetorically imagined and physically and metaphorically associated with natural entities. I contend that this literal naturalization makes immigrant presence less threatening to a national collective by converting these bodies and places into natural resources to be consumed for nationalist purposes. This version of citizenship imagines collectivity as a form of organicism, a process by which foreign subjects and non-citizens can be incorporated into a citizenry as natural resources while not necessarily legally constituted as citizens of the nation.

While the rhetoric surrounding land use began to take new political, constitutional and sociocultural form in the first wave of a formal environmental movement, there simultaneously was a dramatic jurisprudential shift in Indian status in the U.S. This chapter explores how the formulation of an “organic citizen” at the turn of the century draws upon circulating concepts of indigeneity. I bring together Indian reform policy, specifically the Dawes Allotment Act, environmental policy, particularly the Antiquities Act, and fictional writings by Mary Austin and George Bird Grinnell. These narratives demonstrate the consistency with which American Indians were imagined as organically connected to natural lands. I argue that the result is a concept of indigenous organicism that is predicated upon the Indian being publicly, although uncomfortably, imagined as a natural constituent of a citizenry and Indian land as a natural part of a national body.

Chapter Three examines the fictional and political writings of Zitkala-Sa and Charles Eastman to consider how they use stories and their public roles to analyze the
legal and discursive connections between an environmentalist sensibility and concepts of indigeneity. I contend that Eastman and Zitkala-Sa begin to use a language of rights and democracy within this eco-discourse as a way to insert the native as a rights-bearing citizen in the U.S. nation, putting forth a race analysis that ultimately disrupts the idea of ecological assimilation prevalent at the time. Reading their work alongside key environmental policies, like the Organic Act of 1916, Indian reforms, like the Citizenship Act of 1924, and Willa Cather’s novel *The Professor’s House* highlights the persistence of a concept of natural indigeneity that continued to be narrated even after American Indians are given legal citizenship.

Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s use of the environmentalist/native link as a means for race critique falls out of environmentalist thought and practice in a critical moment of transition in the environmental movement. Their use of storytelling and sense of political right, however, lays the foundation for the type of environmental narrative that emerges with the second stage of the environmental movement. My fourth chapter shifts to this moment, focusing on Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) and Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962). I argue that both authors use an environmental narrative, particularly storytelling, as a means to imagine citizen engagement in a participatory democracy. However, while Leopold and Carson incorporate a language of political rights, they do not carefully factor into their versions of national/ecological belonging and action the ways in which race and class identities affect the social, political, and legal standing of various subjects within the eco-nation.
My final chapter explores how a race and class critique in environmentalist thought and politics returns in the last quarter of the twentieth century. I draw from significant legislation and Supreme Court opinions that explicitly defined the political rights of ecological objects and species, such as *Sierra Club v. Morton*, the Endangered Species Act, and a series of legal battles that emerged around the construction of the Tellico Dam, particularly the Cherokees’ resistance to its development. These documents and cases deliberate over the political standing and rights of natural, non-human entities, but they circumnavigate engagement with questions of political standing for geographically and socially marginalized human citizens in the U.S., although this issue is implicitly present and strategically drawn upon in their arguments. This lost component takes shape and political articulation in the following emergence of the environmental justice movement. The politics of voice – “speaking for oneself” – that emerges particularly out of indigenous environmental justice movements highlights the use of storytelling as an activist practice. In their careful novelization of environmental activism, Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms* (1995) and Ruth Ozeki’s *All Over Creation* (2003) not only pinpoint the interconnections, but also the injustices that arise out of the way human and ecological subjectivities are legally and culturally constructed. I argue that both authors use the literary form to model how stories and the act of storytelling allow for the articulation of and/or resistance to certain terms of national affiliation. Both Hogan’s and Ozeki’s novels bring forth an expanded sense of environmentalism, showing
that storytelling can redefine our roles as U.S. citizens and position ourselves as active agents in democratic discourse, policy-making and change.

We are living in another pivotal moment of environmentalist thought as new attention is given to the way environmental conditions are deteriorating and as popular culture begins to take interest in these issues. It is crucial that Literary Studies rigorously engage with these issues to examine the kinds of narratives being generated. While Ecocriticism and Native American Studies have remained somewhat marginalized from the core of Literary Studies, this project (particularly in this moment) argues that these types of criticism and theory have an imperative role to play in illuminating narratives of identity, nation, and citizenship.
For James
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This project comes out of two places for me – one of environmentalist politics and one of social justice. The dissertation is my way of understanding these two passions alongside one another, a meeting of politics that the stories and legal battles of this last century have proven to be greatly conflicted. I have written with an abiding hope that matters of environmental justice – and the important stories told around these issues – will move in from the margins, in the “real life” world of politics, in the intellectual world of Literary Studies, and in the classroom in terms of how and what we teach our students. To get to this point, though, I have depended upon the support and love of people whose contributions, whether directly or indirectly, have enhanced the ideas and words on the following pages.

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Introduction: The Eco-Narrative

In the Spring of 1999, eight Makah men took to a carefully hand-crafted 36 foot-long canoe, paddled out into Neah Bay off the northwest coast of Washington, and conducted the first whale hunt of their people since 1926. They were but a small crew in a non-motorized canoe made of a cedar log, yet ships and helicopters surrounded them as they journeyed out to sea to take a whale. The long story of the Makah’s whale hunt is one of fierce contestation, and more than just the issue of the life (or death) of the whale itself sits at its center. The whale hunt raised profound questions about indigenous cultural expression, environmentalist thought and practice, and the boundaries of U.S. legislation.

For the Makah, a Native American tribe of about 2,000 people who live on their ancestral lands in Washington State’s Olympic Peninsula, the story of this turn-of-the-21st-century whale hunt reaches significantly further back in both tribal and U.S. history. The Makah are known as the whalers of North America, having practiced whaling as part of sacred cultural beliefs, for physical sustenance and, later, for economic trade. In exchange for land, the Makah secured their whaling rights with the U.S. federal government in the 1855 Treaty of Neah Bay, making them the only people of continental
North America to have treaty-protected whaling rights.\(^1\) During the treaty negotiations, a Makah chief purportedly stated “I want the sea. That is my country.”\(^2\) But when the gray whale population plummeted in the 1920’s (due to commercial fishing), the Makah voluntarily stopped their hunting practices. Several decades later, in 1994, the gray whale was taken off the endangered species list, and the Makah Tribal Council (a five member ruling body) brought to the U.S. government – the Department of Commerce (DOC), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) – their intention to resume their whaling practices. Backed by federal support and the 1855 treaty, the Makah applied to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1996, and a year later were granted permission to take up to five whales per year for five years for ceremonial purposes.\(^3\)

Deeply oppositional stances on the whale hunt formed around the Makah’s request. The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, an anti-whaling group notorious for their practice of sinking whaling boats, led the resistance. Paul Watson, Sea Shepherd’s head, insisted that the Makah were being used for worldwide commercial whaling interests (such as Japan, Norway, and Iceland) in an attempt to break the global moratorium on hunting whales in place since 1986. The Makah, however, argued that

\(^1\) “ARTICLE 4. The right of taking fish and of whaling or sealing at usual and accustomed grounds and stations is further secured to said Indians in common with all citizens of the United States…”


\(^3\) Although their own management plan outlined a need-based practice of four per year at most with a likelihood of as few as one per year.
their whaling had nothing to do with the commercial whaling industry, but rather, was an essential ancient tradition designed to reinvigorate their tribal culture. In an open letter to the public, Keith Johnson, president of the Makah Whaling Commission, explained:

Whaling has been part of our tradition for over 2,000 years.... Many of our Tribal members feel that our health problems result from the loss of our traditional sea food and sea mammal diet. We would like to restore the meat of the whale to that diet. We also believe that the problems which are troubling our young people stem from lack of discipline and pride and we hope that the restoration of whaling will help to restore that discipline and pride. But we also want to fulfill the legacy of our forefathers and restore a part of our culture which was taken from us.⁴

And he later added, “[W]e are acting out of purely cultural motives... It is conducted solely because that is our Treaty right and because it fulfills a deep cultural need in our members. It is, if you please, part of our religion, because for us, culture means religion.”

Johnson drew on cultural traditions and legal rights to argue that whaling is a practice that is culturally, spiritually and physically imperative for the future of the Makah people.

Watson and other opponents questioned Johnson’s justification of whaling as an essential cultural practice, pointing to the use of modern technologies among the Makah as an indication that they no longer were rooted in such traditional lifeways.⁵

Additionally, they pointed out that the hunt had not occurred in so many decades that the

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⁴ See http://www.cnie.org/NAE/docs/makaheditorial.html. All references to Johnson are taken from this source.

⁵ A whale tour operator expressed this sentiment clearly: “If they are so hell bent on going back to their roots, why the hell do they insist on: driving cars, using internal combustion engines, fiberglass [sic], aluminum, roads, shopping centres [sic], all the other stuff that has improved their lives since the coming of the ‘White Man.’” See http://www.cnie.org/NAE/cases/makah/m6.html
Makah did not even know how to perform it in a traditional manner (nor how to carve the whale once caught). They pointed out that the hunters planned to use a gun, which, they argued, showed compromised the Makah’s claim that they were following traditional ways. Although Johnson clearly argued for a “hunt that is both traditional and modern,” opponents saw these signs of modernization as evidence of a complete break from the tradition. The opponents expressed a sense that tradition is entirely incongruous with contemporary lifeways, arguing as one coordinator of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society did, “A society can never evolve by adopting archaic or inhumane rituals. Progress affects everyone living in this new era of the Global Village. No legitimate argument can be made that the Makah, or any other ethnic group, can move their culture forward through ritual killing” (qtd. Sullivan 14). This notion keeps tradition and culture retained entirely in a pre-modern past, an idea that places indigenous peoples in quite a bind. They cannot be members of a modern world and a national citizenry without disengaging from traditional culture. If they retain these ties with tradition, they are

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6 The most humane way in which a whale could be killed was researched, and the whalers used both a harpoon and a rifle which was recommended by Dr. Allen Ingling, a veterinarian who specialized in humane killing. As soon as the whale was harpooned, it was to be shot in a precise location to bring about an instant loss of consciousness and death (rather than the prolonged death by internal bleeding that harpooning and spearing would create, as originally practiced).

7 Sea Shepherd Conservation Society also simply discredited a need for maintaining traditional cultural practices. In a retrospective explanation of their protest against the hunt, they argued: “The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society actively opposed the whale hunt by the Makah in 1998 and 1999 in an effort to prevent a dangerous precedent from being set. That precedent was the killing of a whale for a new concept engineered by the United States government called ‘cultural subsistence.’ This meant that whales need not be killed to provide food but should be killed to allow the exercise of a cultural rite. In other words the necessity of hunting could be replaced by a theatrical hunt meant to reenact a historical necessity” (http://www.seashepherd.org/news/media_02_04.html).
imagined as remnants of a pre-modern past and, hence, as marginal to a national citizenry.

A common sentiment among the protesters specifically questions the validity of a modern whale hunt in terms of its alleged disconnect from a traditional nature-based spirituality. For instance, one person voiced her opposition: “I really doubt that [Makah] ancestors would respect this modern day version of whale hunting… It is my understanding that native americans [sic] in the past have always taken (killed) animals…Only [sic] as needed for survival and then in great respect and deep appreciation of the animal. This wanton act of killing certainly does not seem to be motivated by survival, respect for all of earth’s life forms, nor spirituality.”

The assumption expressed here is that Native Americans (in general) have spiritual and cultural beliefs that are tied to a preservationist environmental ethos. Killing a whale does not seem to exemplify in practice what this sentiment imagines in theory about native identity. The nuances in the Makah’s attempt to revitalize cultural practices and in their understanding of the whale hunt as essential to religious and physical welfare are met with this generic, romanticized version of noble nature-loving natives. Johnson wrote of the relationship between human beings and animals in very specific terms: “But we have an understanding of the relationship between people and the mammals of the sea and land. We are a part of each of each other’s life. We are all part of the natural world

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8 See http://www.cnie.org/NAE/cases/makah/index.html.
and predation is also part of life on this planet.” This idea of a man/animal relationship that balances both mutual dependence and “predation” conflicts with a romantic vision of a preservationist native.

Despite these protests, eight Makah men trained spiritually and physically in preparation for the hunt, and on May 17, 1999 took their first gray whale in seven decades.\(^9\) They were surrounded by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society’s ship the *Sirenian* and what Sea Shepherd described as “a flotilla of local citizens and other anti-whaling activists.”\(^10\) In the battle leading up to that moment, both the opponents and the Makah drew upon long-standing narratives of indigeneity, national belonging, and nature. The terms of their debate and the sensational staging of that ideological battle upon the sea dramatize the issues at the very heart of this dissertation. The struggle portrayed vividly the tumultuous relationship between its main actors – indigenous peoples and environmentalists – and, in doing so, it dramatized the conflicting way in which communal membership (both national and tribal), political rights, and nature (the green world) are understood as connected and foundational elements of identity.

Environmentalists’ worldviews and conceptions of native culture are brought to battle here. The fight over the whale hunt is not only a singular moment of conflict, but it more broadly stages how a romanticized connection between the environment and the

\(^9\) The Makah had attempted to implement the first hunt in the fall of 1998, but a two month occupation of Neah Bay by Sea Shepherd and other protestors as well as continued negotiations between the Makah and the NMFS about which whales could be taken and when led to a postponement until the following year.

\(^10\) See “The History of Sea Shepherd Conservation and Whaling” on their website.
native is conflictual in its own right. In the following chapters, I trace a social, political, legal and literary history that the battle over the Makah’s whale hunt exemplifies. This dissertation marks a particular moment of origin for this conflict – the turn of the twentieth century when environmentalism is being formalized for the first time and U.S. Indian reform begins to engage simultaneously with questions of citizenship and land use.

Some of the texts that I examine in this dissertation—fiction, non-fiction, images, science and legislation—have been recognized as “environmental,” while many have not been traditionally categorized as such, yet they reveal a narrative of the last century that brings an environmentalist sensibility into the service of defining the social and political status of the citizen. These diverse texts and the stories they tell generate what I call an eco-narrative that merges conceptions of citizenship, race, ethnicity and nature. Environmentalism, as ecocritic David Mazel notes, is “not just a ‘movement,’ but…a much larger ensemble of interlocking ideas, texts, people and institutions…[that] attains an intellectual, popular, and legal authority” (“American Literacy” 143). The language used and concepts circulated since the conception of environmentalism as a political movement have had implications and social and political uses significantly broader than just land use practice or resource management.

*The Organic Citizen* chronicles the emergence of an environmentalist sensibility, by which I mean a sense of the natural green world that is tied with political and social membership and citizenship status. I am building in this work on Mazel’s notion of
“ecologicality,” the term he uses to designate “the processes by which environmentalism, in all its various manifestations – the love of nature, wilderness adventure, ecological awareness, and so on – has helped discipline the modern national subject” (“A beautiful” 134-135). Legislation, policies and concepts of land use define subjectivity, and the following chapters show how this eco-centered disciplining of national subjectivity is built upon a narrative of natural collectivity. That is, what emerges from these political articulations, fictional pieces, or federal legislation is a concept of the nation as an ecological, natural zone of interdependence and its citizens (or non-citizen inhabitants) as members of an environmentally-conceptualized nation. This shared narrative of natural collectivity generates what I call an organic citizen – the literary-political figure of an individual imagined to be a natural member of an ecological national body. The construction of the organic citizen, in particular, shows how multiple discourses, beyond the “manifestations” of environmentalism to which Mazel refers, synthesize, jointly produce, and politically circulate a narrative of natural collectivity.

This vision of national identity requires that the process of nationalization be one of actual naturalization. Etienne Balibar similarly describes naturalization as central to the concept of a nation, arguing that “no nation possesses an ethnic base naturally, but as social formations are nationalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized – that is, represented in the past or in the future as if they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions” (96).
But what for Balibar in effect is a metaphor in my reading is the consequence of actual ecological and environmental reasoning in the nationalist construction of the “natural.” Balibar’s “fictive ethnicity,” in my understanding, is more than the performance of community; its processes of ethnicization and the fiction of nationhood that it enables are, more literally, made natural in that citizens (and non-citizen inhabitants) are imagined in direct relation to natural lands and resources. Like actual land resources, these naturalized subjects and communities can be put to use for the welfare of the nation within a land use system of governmentally-managed consumption. The “natural community,” then, is a sense of communal interconnectedness that forms around this ecologized subjectivity, making the process of nationalization that Balibar notes reliant upon its formulation of an environmental version of national collectivity.

Although the United States has defined itself territorially since its conception, I argue that organic citizenship is a concept rooted in a particular convergence of politics, scientific thought, and literary production at the turn of the twentieth century. Authors like John Hector de Crevecouer, William Bartram and Henry David Thoreau certainly engaged in eco-thought and writing earlier than this period, but there is a crucial shift at the end of the nineteenth century that marks it as a foundational moment in defining the nation and its citizenry through environmental thought. Many critics have attended to this period as one of heightened immigration, urbanization and industrialization, but what interests me most about this moment is that it also witnessed the formalization of both environmentalism and the science of ecology in the U.S.
While debates about immigrant populations and urban spaces were underway, a new debate over the official federal role in environmental policy emerged along with scientific notions of ecological interdependence. I explore this shared emergence in Chapter One and reflect on the writings of leading environmentalists John Muir and Gifford Pinchot in relation to scientists Henry Chandler Cowles and Frederick Clements and social reformers like Charles Zueblin and Jane Addams in particular. This chapter begins to show how the language of plants, forests, and ecological growth (or deterioration) emerges in writings and speeches that, on the surface, seemingly have little or nothing to do with the actual ecological world. At the same time, the writers and public figures engaged in the environmentalist debate of the moment and the formulation of ecology, those who were writing and talking specifically about the ecological world and resource management, use the language of interdependence, citizenship and/or democracy. The smooth swapping of language in this moment not only links writings across diverse arenas, but it also signals to readers that there are connections among the way environmentalist thought and policy take shape, the way ecology is defined, and the way the processes of acculturation and urban reform are narrated.

Examining the concept of ecological interdependence in this chapter highlights how it was articulated in other venues as a means to define the processes of human community formation and to explain the process of cultural assimilation. Ideas of plant community formation and the language used to explain it in the new field of ecology sound similar to the vocabulary being used to describe the presence of ethnic subjects in
the United States. Ultimately, the chapter highlights a discursive web that links a scientific notion of plant communities, a sociological notion of social interdependence, a socio-political notion of cultural assimilation, and conservationist notions and federal policies of natural resource and land use management. This shared vocabulary and concepts of communal interconnection imagine people living in the U.S. as natural or organic subjects, similar to plant-life, and citizenship as an ecological condition. This discourse has particular consequences for the immigrant and impoverished non-citizen inhabitant of urban sites. In defining citizenship as a form of organic collectivity, these subjects and the urban places in which they live are incorporated rhetorically into a citizenry as natural resources, and thus as able to be federally managed for the welfare of the nation, while not necessarily legally constituted as citizens of that nation.

The ecologization of the U.S. citizen (and its specific way of defining ethnic others) has complex connections to the contemporaneous concept of indigeneity. There have been long-standing conflicted notions of the natural Indian (including definitions like the noble savage and the primitive) which have been used to define the U.S. nation either in opposition to or alongside of nativeness since the moment of contact. But the turn of the twentieth century marked a pivotal moment, when the overlap between Indian reform and environmental reform defined Indian status in the U.S. by legally associating certain land use ethics and practices with citizenship roles. In Chapter Two, I explore how the concept of organic citizenship both relies upon and redefines the concept of indigeneity and the political positioning of Native American subjects in the U.S. The
dramatic jurisprudential shift in Indian status marked by the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 highlights how the legislation of land use (or resource management) and the legislation of Indian citizenship significantly affect each other. The Dawes Act is a narrative of ecological belonging that rhetorically and legally links land use, the “rights” of a “civilized” individual, and citizenship status. This act models the convergence of Indian reform and environmental resource management, and it ultimately demonstrates how the formulation of organic citizenship in this particular moment naturalizes racial difference as a means to rectify the uneasy position of the native subject on U.S. land and within the U.S. citizenry.

Laws that were not designated as Indian reform laws at the turn of the century, particularly the American Antiquities Act of 1906, work across these boundaries as well. This act uses a discourse of national welfare to legislate simultaneously environmental resources and Indian status. The chapter reads these two enactments alongside the short fiction writings of interdisciplinary figures like George Bird Grinnell and Hamlin Garland and Mary Austin’s *The Land of Little Rain* (1903). Together, they show the consistency with which American Indians were imagined as organically connected to natural lands. This turn of the century conflation of legal, cultural and literary imaginings of the Indian role in the nation and of land use tries to undercut the geographical, physical, and conceptual threat to the development of the U.S. national collective that Indians are imagined to be. What emerges is a problematic concept of an indigenous eco-citizen whose role as a member of the U.S. nation is predicated upon legally defined and
culturally supported notions of a racial identity that is inextricably entrenched in the natural world.

A century later, we can see the implications of such a concept of the native citizen in the battle over the Makah whale hunt. Keith Johnson hints at this problem in his open letter when he writes: “Whales are definitely ‘in.’ Does that mean that Indians are ‘out?’” The world has had a similar fascination with us and our cultures, but whenever we had something you wanted or did something you didn’t like, you tried to impose your values on us.” The mutual “fascination” with animals and American Indians roots native peoples in a natural world, and understands natives and nature as organically one and the same. When something like the Makah whale hunt happens, a troublesome dissonance emerges between a vision of the natural native, on one hand, and an act that is perceived to contradict a natural symbiosis with land and animals on the other hand. As Johnson suggests, while the native and the whale are imagined as one – regardless of the ways in which the Makah themselves define their cultural practice of whale hunting and their relationship with the species – a shift happens when suddenly it is made clear that native peoples are human beings who may prey upon those animals. Such an act seems unnatural.

American Indian authors at the turn of the twentieth century used literary narrative to begin to resist this racial and cultural naturalization. I examine the fictional and political writings of Charles Eastman and Zitkala-Sa in Chapter Three to consider how these prominent native authors of the time used their stories and their public
positions to examine the role of indigeneity in the construction of citizenship and U.S. nationhood. Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s writings challenge the legal and discursive connections between an environmentalist sensibility and concepts of indigeneity. Both authors begin to use a language of rights and democracy within the eco-discourse of this moment as a means to insert the Indian as a rights-bearing citizen of the U.S. They draw upon familiar images of the natural Indian (for instance, praising the Indian for an “out-of-doors” character, comparing oneself to a tree) and in doing so, they participate in the broader political narrative of ecological assimilation that equated racial and ethnic others with land resources. However, their participation in this eco-discourse puts pressure on how democracy and democratic participation and membership are imagined.

These narratives of resistance challenge contemporaneous concepts of citizenship and communal membership and begin to model how an environmental narrative can redefine the terms of affiliation in a participatory democracy. Rather than a dismissal of native political rights, their writings attempt to insert native subjects into the role of citizen. Examining their work in this light shows, generally, the complexity of an environmentalist sensibility that both fuels assimilationism but also becomes a venue for political dissent. And in particular, it highlights the way Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s writings anticipate the potential for a political critique that brings together environmentalist thought and civil rights activism.

In positioning the Indian as an ideal member of a national democratic community, Eastman and Zitkala-Sa’s writings disrupt the assimilationist sentiment that fuels the
encompassing eco-narrative. By carefully infusing a contemporary eco-discourse with indigenous rights language, their writings challenge the process of “Americanization” embraced at the time, suggesting that the calls for an Americanized native are deeply entrenched in a romanticized conception of the natural native that restricts access to real-life democratic rights. Looking at their writings from this angle suggests to me that Eastman and Zitkala-Sa were articulating a certain eco-politics as a means to analyze race-based inequities, and it indicates how these eco-politics were a critical element within what Gerald Vizenor explains as “simulations of survivance.”

Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s writings circulate around conservationist and citizenship laws that continue to affect Native American communities and to define Indian membership in the U.S. First, the Organic Act of 1916 again provides dual legislation of land and Indians, although it is explicitly framed as an environmental law rather than Indian reform. The troubled equation implicitly made between Indians and insect pests in this act demonstrates the conflation of natives with the ecological world. In so doing, the act exemplifies how the legal tension between preserving lands as national parks and destroying elements of it (i.e., animal or plant life defined as “detrimental” to the land) mirrors the tension between both preserving and destroying Indian presence as a means to benefit the nation. Second, the Citizenship Act of 1924 finally extends citizenship to all natives, but as Walter Benn Michaels argues, it is a citizenship paradoxically constructed to prevent their citizenship and one reliant upon the notion of their near-extinction (the “Vanishing Indian”). The dissonance that Michaels
notes between the legal positioning and actual sociocultural status of the Indian is a product of eco-discourse that attempts to assimilate as if natural the perceived unnatural and unassimilable other.

While these environmental and Indian reform policies are put forth on the federal level, officially defining a limited and liminal status as the ultimate role for Indian citizens, Willa Cather’s novel *The Professor’s House* (1925) demonstrates how this conflicted notion of natural indigeneity persists in cultural thought and literary production even after citizenship is offered to all natives. Cather’s novel highlights, through fiction, the myth of the Vanishing Indian at the exact moment in which Indian citizenship in the U.S. has been granted. Indigeneity in *The Professor’s House* is something to be conserved not through equitable legal and sociocultural statuses for living Indians, but through an ecological symbiosis between non-indigenous peoples and land. Once pesky native presences, like the Organic Act’s animals and insects, have been relocated both geographically (i.e., moved off of territory newly marked as U.S. rather than tribally owned) and in the cultural imagination (i.e., “vanished” Indians), federally preserved land sites offer the possibility of enacting an ecological organicness and a symbolic nativeness for non-Indian individuals and the U.S. more broadly.

Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s use of the environmentalist/native link as a means for race critique falls out of environmentalist thought and practice in the critical moment of transition in the environmental movement. Their use of storytelling and sense of political rights, however, lays the foundation for the type of narrative that emerges with the second
stage of the environmental movement. The second half of my dissertation turns to the formulation of the modern environmental movement which began in the middle of the twentieth-century to trace the progress of the eco-narrative and concept of the organic citizen through its surrounding shifts in legal debates, political organizations and sociocultural understandings of the environment. The fourth chapter examines the primary texts that led into the modern environmental movement – Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) and Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962). Leopold’s writing defined what he termed a “land ethic,” expanding the boundaries of communal membership to incorporate land and its animal and ecological entities. The politicization of natural beings in Leopold’s writing – his idea that these entities are part of a “biotic citizen[ship]” along with human beings – is central to the environmental ethics that he articulates. The essays collected in *A Sand County Almanac* use this language of citizenship and rights to invest the natural with political membership (that is, the inclusion of non-human natural entities into a human, political system of collective membership) and to encourage a shift in human perception towards the conservation of these entities.

While Carson articulated interest in the political subjectivity of the non-human natural world in her early writings (contemporaneously published with Leopold’s earlier writings), the text for which she is most famous turns attention directly to the role of human citizens in the U.S. *Silent Spring*, a polemic about the effects of pesticides on land and bodies, became a bestseller, brought environmental concern to the public eye,
and continues to be touted as the text that launched the contemporary environmental movement. Carson’s formulation of an environmentalist “right to know” promotes the citizen’s right to protect one’s body from toxins. In *Silent Spring*, matters of science enter into the realm of the political, making the matter of pesticides something relevant not only within the scientific community, but one that is imperative to the regular citizen. This call “to know” as a political right of citizens allows Carson to escort her non-expert readers through the bulk of her narrative and the density of scientific discourse. That is, the act of reading through the multiple genres in *Silent Spring* becomes the first step towards citizen protest and democratic decision-making. Literacy, specifically the consumption of an environmentalist narrative, becomes the catalyst for political engagement, social action, and environmental change.

Leopold and Carson both use environmental narrative, and particularly storytelling, as a means to imagine citizen engagement in a participatory democracy. But while both incorporate a language of rights, neither carefully factors into his or her version of national/eco/loical belonging and action the ways in which race and class identities affect the social, political, and legal standing of various subjects within an ecologically-conceptualized nation.

This kind of questioning and analysis, which Zitkala-Sa and Eastman had begun to articulate in the early decades of the twentieth century, would emerge again in writings a few decades after Leopold’s and Carson’s texts were published, at the turn of the twenty first century. However, significant legal debate, environmental policy changes,
and new political organization that emerge in the years in between these narratives generate important questions concerning the intersections of ecological entities, environmental conditions, and political rights that lay the groundwork for the types of critique that could emerge later. In the final chapter, I examine the legal debate over the political standing and rights of natural, non-human entities that begins in the 1970’s with Christopher D. Stone’s essay “Should Trees Have Standing?” and the landmark case *Sierra Club v. Morton.* This moment is a pivotal one because the question of how social and political subjectivity relates to ecological entities is deliberately brought into the Supreme Court. That is, the Court is required *explicitly* to define the boundaries of the intersections that I show throughout my project to be *implicitly* interconnected throughout the previous several decades.

Although the Court officially denied standing to non-human ecological entities, the very nature of this debate and the conflicted legal opinions that emerged around it highlight how these questions are not only restricted to a limited environmental realm, but are also an engagement with the broader questions of national belonging. The enactment of the Endangered Species Act and the emergence of a series of cases regarding the building of the Tellico Dam soon after this moment further demonstrate how environmentalist thought and legal deliberation are very much about defining a social and political place in a citizenry. In particular, the way in which Indian rights are subsumed within the battle over Tellico Dam and how these cases show their political position to be less powerful in the courtroom than that of an endangered species called
the snail darter demonstrates the complexities of the political standing questions in a democratic system. Traces of this same problem arise in the protest of the Makah whale hunt when the Animal Protection Institute of America, for instance, wrote in an open letter: “People from many cultures worldwide hold whales to be sacred and consider each species a sovereign nation unto itself, worthy of respect and protection.”

This deep ecological sentiment draws upon the vocabulary used to define Indian civil rights – sovereignty – as a means to dismiss those rights for native peoples in favor of animals.

The environmental justice movement emerges in the 1980’s to address race and class inequities in connection with environmental conditions. The movement, in its various forms, finally brings together the sociocultural and political dimensions of environmentalist thought and civil rights activism to advocate against the inequitable race and class-based distribution of environmental toxins. Although these legal battles and this political movement are emerging within an environmental realm and are coded as environmental law or politics, I argue that they simultaneously are dealing with broader questions of who the citizen is, what type of voice the citizen can be given, and what kind of practice the citizen should perform.

The chapter and dissertation conclude with a reading of two contemporary novels, Linda Hogan’s Solar Storms (1995) and Ruth Ozeki’s All Over Creation (2003). In their careful novelization of environmental activism, Hogan and Ozeki identify not only the...

11 See http://www.highnorth.no/Library/Hunts/Makah/op-le-to.htm.
interconnections, but also the injustices that arise out of the way human and ecological subjectivities are legally and culturally constructed. Their stories highlight the nuances of environmentalist practice and thought, and in doing so, they become articulate critiques that expose some of the material consequences of making associations among race, culture, and environment. *Solar Storms* and *All Over Creation* ultimately show environmentalism to be significantly broader than a set of politics and concerns that center solely on natural spaces or entities. Hogan and Ozeki both return to the language of plants that hearkens back to a similar language invoked by writers and social thinkers at the turn of the last century, but their novels complicate this language and, like the social and political protests they depict in their novels, they disrupt the nationalist elements embedded within this discourse. Their use of fiction to model and perform this critique highlights the role of literature in redefining citizenship and democratic practice.

As Sean Kicummah Teuton argues, “[L]iterature can represent reality, and, so doing, gives us a place in which to imagine what kind of social vision it would take for Indian Country to flourish” (39-40). These novels demonstrate the activist potential that can emerge out of a literary-political engagement with the connection between ecological and cultural devastation.

As environmental conditions worsen and the eco-politics surrounding these problems re-emerge in our current moment, it is crucial that we recognize the nuanced and long-standing interconnections among ecological thought, practice, and policy and social and political belonging in the United States. *The Organic Citizen* explores how
literature and literary studies can contribute to this conversation at a crucial academic, cultural, and political moment of environmentalist thought.
Chapter One
Cultivating Natural Citizens:
Urban Reform, Plant Ecology and the Birth of Environmentalism

“This is the penalty of democracy,—that we are bound to move forward or retrograde together, None of us can stand aside; our feet are mired in the same soil, and our lungs breathe the same air.”

-Jane Addams, Democracy and Social Ethics, 1902

I. Introduction

In Mary Antin’s 1912 short story “First Aid to the Alien,” the main character, a “naturalist”/“botanist,” warns, “No-rubbish-on-the-floor. In America all little boys must be good…Never throw rubbish out of any window. That’s not American. See the pretty country—smell the woods. That’s America. You don’t want to spoil it. Rubbish is bad” (484). This botanist, who smells of “crushed grass” after spending a day collecting “specimens” in the woods has the misfortune of sharing a trolley ride back into “a far metropolis” beside an immigrant Italian family comprised, to his dismay, of multiple unruly children and their mother. The botanist’s journey becomes an opportunity to teach the children a vital lesson about how to live in America so that “these little ‘dagos’—these future American citizens” will “find [America] a happy land, if [they] use it right” (484). In addition to training the children how to place garbage in a receptacle, the botanist points out a flag with patriotic gusto, instructing, “That is America! America! Don’t forget” (485). While readers might sense that the story mocks the naturalist and his sense of pedagogical and cultural exceptionality, it is not until the end of the story that
we hear the punch line – one of his friends, a teacher in “an immigrant section,” finds great humor in a “greenhorn” child by the name of Tomaso Verticelli who, in response to a question about the American flag, declares earnestly “America! No rubbish on the floor!” (485).

The botanist’s “first aid to the alien” ultimately is a misguided lesson in “the concept of American democracy” (485). However misguided, though, the way this lesson unfolds is striking. Antin’s story of Americanization-gone-slightly-awry brings together immigrants and a naturalist – a character whose relationship with the land and its natural “specimens” is a physical, sensory presence in the story (i.e., his smell and the specimens in the jar he carries) – and positions them between industrialized and forested zones. A central component of Americanness in this story is, in a sense, what we would call “going green” today – participating in an act or practice to help improve environmental conditions. This green Americanization shows up elsewhere in Antin’s work as well.

The convergence of immigrant and naturalist, city and country, and citizens and non-citizens has a peculiarly prominent role in her autobiography, *The Promised Land*. Published the same year as “First Aid to the Alien” in 1912, *The Promised Land* chronicles her own experience of immigration and transformation from Russian Jew into an American citizen. Antin presents her participation in the Natural History Club as an
essential element (if not the primary one) in her Americanization experience.\footnote{She defines the club as the highest “symbol of genuine, practical equality of all our citizens” (283).} A crystallizing moment for Antin, as she narrates it near the conclusion of her autobiography, occurs just after an excursion with the club to study marine life: standing before the public library, “[her] jar of specimens in [her] hand,” she describes a sudden awareness of her place in America’s past and future. This image of herself and the sense of a deeply entrenched national belonging in what she emphasizes as a defining moment rest upon her experiences with nature study. By the end of \textit{The Promised Land}, Antin’s autobiographical figure of herself is a combination of both immigrant Tomaso Verticelli and the American botanist, a combination that depicts in literary form the nuanced dimensions and problematic nature of bringing the environmental into the service of defining the immigrant and his/her role in the nation.

The meeting of a naturalist, immigrants, and ecological green things, and the lessons on national norms that are expressed in that meeting, narrate the actual rhetorical and political convergence of these realms taking shape in this moment. Placing this story in the context of turn of the twentieth century scientific and cultural debates about American identity shows that Antin’s writing participates in a political and socio-cultural narrative of national belonging that brings an environmental sentiment into the service of the ideals and processes of naturalization.
This chapter tracks the rhetorical connections that Antin narrates between the first stage of a formal environmental movement, immigration debates, urbanization concern/reform and new concepts of citizenship emerging together at the turn of the twentieth century. There is significant overlap among the literary articulations of this social and political work, and they collectively define individual subjectivity and national belonging. An environmentalist sentiment connects the diverse texts that I examine in this chapter, although they are not all directly invested in strictly defined environmental concerns of the moment. This interdisciplinary collection of texts forms the bedrock of an eco-narrative that imagines national membership through concepts of ecological interdependence. It is out of the conversation both reflected in and generated by these texts that the organic citizen emerges. At its beginning, this notion of organic citizenship aids in defining processes of assimilation. As immigration to the U.S. increases, the intersecting concepts of ecological organicness and political citizenship that I explore below carefully frame national membership and the inclusion of ethnic others in that body as a particular process of assimilation. The literal naturalization of American subjectivity and collectivity in this moment, at its extreme, positions the citizen and the immigrant, in particular, as a natural resource, and thus as able to be federally managed for the welfare of a larger ecological entity, the nation.

It is crucial that we recognize the production and circulation of this environmentally-charged discourse of citizenship because it uncovers problematic elements of a naturalized citizenry; this discourse attempts to incorporate *naturally* the
(perceived) unnatural ethnic or racial other within the nation by relying upon contemporaneous concepts of ecological adaptation, absorption or cultivation. This eco-naturalization, then, is one that attempts to assimilate entirely these subjects. If we do not attend to this narrative and consider how environmental thought is politically appropriated to make sense of ethnic and racial difference in this moment, we risk naturalizing critically, socio-culturally and politically these problematic processes of naturalization. As Ursula K. Heise points out, theorists critique such a paradigm because “…the questionable assumption that social systems are indeed in some way homologous to ecological ones…lends itself so easily to the ‘naturalization’ of historically, socially, and culturally contingent practices” (395).

David Mazel’s observation that “environmentalism is more than a movement” informs my analysis, and also helps explain my methodology in this chapter. In order to see how environmentalism begins to work in a broader set of discourses in this particular moment, we must critically engage with a range of texts produced in different arenas of political work at the turn of the century – city beautification and reform, immigration reform, Americanization debates, and land use debates. Exploring the convergence of these realms allows us to track the interdisciplinary narrative that unexpectedly shares an environmentalist sensibility. This common sensibility equates the practice of citizenship and national belonging with land use and resource management at a moment when the definitions of both are being rigorously debated.
The language used at the conception of environmentalism as a political movement was a complex discourse with implications and social and political uses significantly broader than just land use practice or resource management. The rhetoric of the first popular environmental figures, John Muir and Gifford Pinchot, draws from concerns articulated in realms seemingly outside of environmentalism about national belonging, progress, and strength. The publicly recognized environmental movement at the turn of the twentieth century was not just the beginning of a political cause, as it often is recognized, but also engaged in a contemporaneous narrative about U.S. nationhood and the role citizens play in sustaining a democratic state.

II. Preservation, Conservation and Patriotic Gusto

“To waste, to destroy our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified and developed.”

-Theodore Roosevelt, 1907

Environmentalism took formal shape as a political movement at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, when urban and industrial development and immigration were at their height. At a moment when the naturalization of immigrants was feared as a potential denaturalization of the nation, the writing of prominent figures (connected both directly and, as I will show, indirectly, with environmentalism) produced an ecological metaphor of the city, and more widely, the
nation, as a forest or garden in which plants (i.e., citizens) can be cultivated naturally and comfortably. By putting this logic into political and sociocultural vocabulary at the turn of the twentieth century, the narratives about city inhabitants, urban space, and environmentalism join together in creating a new kind of citizen and in reimagining the purpose of American land and what it means to live upon it. The reasoning and language used to discuss American wilderness and industrialized, immigrant-inhabited cities among both new environmentalists and city-focused progressives at this particular time “make up citizens” by producing and circulating this narrative of natural collectivity.²

John Muir and Gifford Pinchot were the leading spokespeople who brought environmentalism into the public eye, organized environmental interests into a set of defined movements, rallied citizen groups around these causes, and garnered federal attention and ultimately legislation as a result. Muir and Pinchot came to articulate different philosophies that, to a certain extent, developed around conflicting sets of environmental ethics. This history and their writing mark a climactic political moment for environmental thought, when a chain of environmental concepts being articulated in multiple forums found expression in an organized movement. This movement is the officially recognized part of the story of environmental thought. These famous environmentalists, Muir and Pinchot, drew upon familiar Progressive Era language and

concepts of citizenship. Combining the progressive discourse of democratic participation with an environmentalist sentiment, this budding movement helped to put an official version of naturalized citizenship into political and public circulation. While the concept of citizenship that these environmental ethics put forth applied to all inhabitants of the U.S., it had particular implications for immigrant populations.

John Muir was co-founder and president of the Sierra Club, which he organized in 1892 to promote the preservation of wilderness through national parks. Muir argued in 1897 that “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains for life” (1). He thought that the government should intervene in land use practices as a way to limit privatized interests (like the timber industry) and as a means to preserve the splendor of these lands. The basic understanding of Muir’s position is that he believed wilderness should be preserved for its own sake, its inherent beauty being enough to deem it worthy of government protection and preservation (particularly from the tremendous industrial pursuits at the turn of the century).

Gifford Pinchot was brought into government work when he was appointed by Grover Cleveland to the National Forest Commission in 1896. He then assumed the head position of the Division of Forestry in 1898, beginning the era of scientific forestry when the U.S. government intervened in the privatized practice of clear-cutting forests. Suggesting that “wilderness is waste,” Pinchot promoted what he called “wise-use.” He
developed his position in his 1910 book *The Fight for Conservation*, in which he argued that natural resources should be put “to the most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people, not the temporary benefit of individuals or companies” (qtd. in Andrews 145).

Although Muir and Pinchot initially supported each other and found common cause in their environmental activism (before Pinchot became involved in the Division of Agriculture in 1898), a deep divide would highlight the differences in their philosophies and put into motion an important political debate over land use ethics and how the government should intervene. The split began when the Forest Management Act was passed in 1897 that stated as a primary purpose the furnishing of a “continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States,” opening the forest preserves to mining and grazing.³ Both Muir and Pinchot agreed that the land was useful and necessary for the “citizens of the United States,” but the type of use and reason for its necessity were at odds. Different camps of environmental thought quickly formed around these two central figures and their particular brand of environmentalism.

³ The General Land Revision Act of 1891 had given the president the authority to “set aside and reserve… any part of the public lands wholly or partly covered with timber or undergrowth, whether of commercial value or not.” It did not explicitly authorize development or use of resources on the reserved lands, which is why the Forest Management Act followed a few years later.
Although they both called their ethic “conservationism,” Muir’s line of thought became known as “preservation,” while Pinchot’s became known as “conservation.”

The battle between these two camps for governmental-endorsement would continue for a number of years, and come to a head in the Hetch Hetchy conflict. In 1906 an earthquake and fire led San Francisco’s mayor to apply to the Department of the Interior to gain water rights over the Hetch Hetchy Valley (part of Yosemite National Park), so that it may be dammed and turned into a reservoir for city use. Pinchot supported the plan and Muir, of course, did not. The battle continued until 1913 when the Raker Act allowed the valley to be flooded and the O’Shaughnessy Dam to be built. This marked the official governmental support of the conservationist ethic (over preservation), and it put this sentiment into legislation.

Although Pinchot promoted what he called “the essential practicability of conservative forestry” while Muir saw a “pure wilderness” valuable simply due to its beauty, they actually share an underlying set of concerns and beliefs that make their discourse similar in ways that have not been discussed extensively by literary critics. Both men are deeply concerned with national development, and, in formulating their environmental ethics into political arguments, Muir and Pinchot turn to two main concepts as guiding rhetorical tools: one of citizen engagement and one of resource 

\footnote{In fact, when Pinchot began to connect the concept of “wise-use” directly with the term “conservation,” Muir and his supporters called him a “de-conservationist.” For more information on their conflict and on Muir’s influence on the environmental movement, see Roderick Nash, Chapter 8 “John Muir: Publicizer.”}
management, both of which they argue are critical to sustaining and enhancing national character and progress. In addition, both Muir and Pinchot use metaphors of industry or urban environment, indicating an unexplored overlap between their environmental work and the work happening at the same time to redeem the city as a space and population that are less threatening, natural extensions of the national body.

Pinchot contributed his first prose about natural resources in 1901. In this initial publication, “Forest Destruction,” Pinchot explicitly links national progress and natural resources: “From the point of view of national progress… every part of the land surface should be given that use under which it will contribute most to the general prosperity, and the purpose of whose action is best phrased, in the language of President Roosevelt, as ‘the perpetuation of forests by use.’ The essential reasonableness of this point of view…is doing more than any other single factor to call attention to the wastefulness of forest destruction and to emphasize the essential practicability of conservative forestry” (401). Conservationist practice and policy – putting the land to “practical” use for human benefit – are the means by which “national progress” can be sustained. He proposes, then, that dirt is not just dirt, trees are not just trees; rather, they contribute significantly to national wealth – “Fertile soil is the product of long geological processes and is perhaps the most valuable asset of any nation” (402) – and they are tools of industry: “That a manufacturing plant should remain idle is instantly recognized as a loss to any community. The forest is a manufacturing plant for the production of wood. That a forest soil should remain idle from the production of trees, or should produce but a part of the
wood it is capable of making, is as clearly detrimental as for a factory to be shut down or to be occupied but half the working days” (404). Pinchot’s figurative language of industry and his metaphor of industrial development imagine the actual productivity of natural resources as not only a goods-producing industry, but also an industriousness located at the foundation of national progress.

In contrast, preservationist John Muir laments the “vice of over-industry” earlier in his essay “The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West” (1898, subsequently reprinted in 1901 as the first chapter in his book Our National Parks). He suggests, instead, that what is “useful” (a word he uses repeatedly) about the forest is its capacity to “enrich [“over-civilized people’s”] own little ongoings with those of Nature, and to get rid of rust and disease” (1). Muir points to the “growing interest in the care and preservation of forests and wild places in general, and in half wild parks and gardens of towns” as an indication of a human need for wilderness, a need that increased dramatically with American misuse of wild lands (2). Like Pinchot, Muir suggests that the American wilderness certainly is “useful” to the nation, but his argument is very different from Pinchot’s claim that natural resources are a tool of industrial development. Muir sees and values these lands as a “pure wilderness” and calls upon both the government and the citizenry to participate in the preservation of their supreme beauty:

…[K]nowing that they were acquainted with all the great forests of the world, I asked whether they knew any coniferous forest that rivaled that of the Sierra. They unhesitatingly said: ‘No. In the beauty and grandeur of individual trees, and in number and variety of species, the Sierra forests surpass all others.’ The Sierra Reserve, proclaimed by the President of the United States in September, 1893, is
worth the most thoughtful care of the government for its own sake, without considering its value as the fountain of the rivers, on which the fertility of the great San Joaquin Valley depends. Yet it gets no care at all. In the fog of tariff, silver, and annexation politics it is left wholly unguarded…. In the meantime, lumbermen are allowed to spoil it at their will, and sheep in uncountable ravenous hordes to trample it and devour every green leaf within reach… If every citizen could take one walk through this reserve, there would be no more trouble about its care; for only in darkness does vandalism flourish. (33-34 emphases added)5

The philosophical divide between the men’s environmental ethics is made quite clear here. While Muir, like Pinchot, is clearly concerned with the privatized use of lands for timber and agriculture, unlike Pinchot, he pushes for forest preservation “for its own sake.” Robert L. Brulle, following B.P. Taylor, suggests that Muir “kept the radical political critique of industrial civilization; however, instead of seeing nature as an alternative vision of social order, he saw wilderness as a source of religious inspiration and personal satisfaction…. [T]he arguments for the preservation of nature by this discursive frame were primarily aesthetic. Natural areas were preserved for individual recreation involving spiritual renewal by exposure to natural beauty” (163). While Muir’s rhetoric clearly emerges out of transcendentalist philosophy, I depart from Brulle’s argument that his vision does not engage with matters of “social order.” Rather, in the moment I am examining, it becomes clear how Muir’s forest-for-its-own-sake position was politically and rhetorically situated within a larger narrative of national

5 Muir includes a footnote in 1909 to acknowledge some improvement: “The outlook over forest affairs is now encouraging. Popular interest, more practical than sentimental in whatever touches the welfare of the country’s forests, is growing rapidly, and a hopeful beginning has been made by the Government in real protection for the reservations as well as for the parks” (27). The date of this footnote is telling as my later discussion of the government’s intervention in environmental rhetoric and practice will show.
progress, one that both explicitly and implicitly dealt with the very questions of “social order.” Muir’s suggestion that should a citizen witness the magnificence of the Sierra then there would be “no more trouble about its care” implicitly positions the citizenry as the main force behind environmental policy. The citizen, by this argument, becomes the empowered caretaker of the thing/place “pure wilderness,” but also the nurturer of something, a quality, that is “pure[ly]” American.

Muir concludes his essay with a look at the regions within the Grand Cañon Reserve of Arizona, and, again, he suggests its exceptional global status:

…so incomparably lovely and grand and supreme is it above all other cañons in our fire-moulded, earthquake-shaken, rain-washed, wave-washed river and glacier sculptured world… Instead of being filled with air, the vast space between the walls is crowded with Nature’s grandest buildings, - a sublime city of them, painted in every color, and adorned with richly fretted cornice and battlement spire and tower in endless variety of style and architecture. Every architectural intention of man has been anticipated, and far more, in this grandest of God’s terrestrial cities. (35-36 emphases added)

While Pinchot uses the language and metaphor of industrial development to attach significance to nature, Muir shifts into images of urban structure, suggesting that these regions are, in fact, natural cities. Muir’s and Pinchot’s metaphors of “wild places” as natural and industrially productive urban zones coincide with the rhetorical and conceptual work occurring contemporaneously to refigure the city and its inhabitants within the geographical and communal collective of the U.S. as a nation.

A concept of citizen engagement helps to link environmental sentiment and urban reform. Published in 1901 (including pieces that had been published previously in
Atlantic Monthly), much of Muir’s book Our National Parks reads as a combination of what might be called nature writing and scientific didacticism; for instance, he moves from comments like, “A few erratic boulders nicely poised on the rounded summit of the monument tell an interesting story” (89) and “Going to the woods is going home” (98) to “Bogs occur only in shallow alpine basins where the climate is cool enough for sphagnum…” (139). At times like these, his language seems so deeply engaged with the natural world and human experience in the wilderness, but at many other points it also echoes language used to talk about the urban environment. This crossover happens primarily when Muir’s talk of wilderness begins to sound very much like progressivists’ talk of democratic participation. In his short Preface, Muir expresses his mission “to show forth the beauty, grandeur, and all-embracing usefulness of our wild mountain forest reservations and parks, with a view to inciting the people to come and enjoy them, and get them into their hearts, that so at length their preservation and right use might be made sure.” Muir sees his narrative as a means by which “the people” can be inspired to action. His hope that Americans will visit and work to preserve natural lands simultaneously is a call to make these lands a part of themselves (“get them into their hearts”). In Muir’s formulation, there is a way to put these places and people to the “right use” for a greater national purpose. Both nature sites and American citizens themselves – who ultimately Muir images as conceptually intertwined – are resources, “useful” to each other. Muir’s idea finds company not only in Pinchot’s conservationism, we will see, but also in other political arenas at the time.
After hundreds of pages of greatly detailed descriptions of national parks, land reservations and sequoia trees, Muir’s final chapter moves into the broader terrain of the nation as a whole. Entitled “The American Forests,” this chapter first was published in *The Atlantic* in 1897, just prior to Muir’s split from Pinchot (and written before his essay that I discussed above). Muir begins his chapter with a direct revisiting of the biblical creation story in Genesis, asserting that “The forests of America, however, slighted by man, must have been a great delight to God; for they were the best He ever planted. The whole continent was a garden, and from the beginning it seemed to be favored above all the other wild parks and gardens of the globe” (331). Muir figures the United States as a divinely planted garden, a physical/geographical version of the biblical Garden of Eden based on the quality of its natural lands. When he presents this nation-garden as initially the most “favored” of all others, Muir positions the United States as a “glob[al]” power based on the beauty of its natural lands. His nationalism, then, is drawn entirely from his concept of “the whole continent [as] a garden.” The fall from this realized Garden of Eden happens as a result of misuse and abuse of its natural lands, which he marks as initially beginning with the transition from a human population of Indians to a human population of white settlers and following through the new environmental policies of his contemporary moment. Muir works to impress implicitly upon his readers that a fall in the natural condition of the nation (a ravaging of the continental garden) signifies a

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*I will return to the biblical reference to the Christian version of creation as narrated in Genesis in my final chapter when I discuss Ruth Ozeki’s novel *All Over Creation.*
weakening of its position as a “glob[al]” power and a lack of participation on the part of the citizenry as well.

The power to prevent this loss of natural lands (and hence the power to strengthen the United States as a nation) lies in the hands of “honest citizens,” who potentially have the capacity to shape governmental practice and policy (361). Ultimately, it is “only Uncle Sam” who can preserve natural lands from industrial plummeting with official, legal authority, but Muir’s text positions the regular citizen as the instigator and force behind these federal policies (365). His essay and the book end with a discussion of this citizenry:

*The United States government has always been proud of the welcome it has extended to good men of every nation, seeking freedom and homes and bread. Let them be welcomed still as nature welcomes them to the woods as well as the prairies and plains. No place is too good for good men, and still there is room. They are invited to heaven, and may well be allowed in America. Every place is made better by them. Let them be as free to pick gold and gems from the hills, to cut and hew, dig and plant, for homes and bread, as the birds are to pick berries from the wild bushes, and moss and leaves for nests. The ground will be glad to them, and the pines will come down from the mountains for their homes as willingly as the cedars came from Lebanon for Solomon’s temple. Nor will the woods be the worse for this use, or their benign influences be diminished any more than the sun is diminished by shining. Mere destroyers, however, tree-killers, wool and mutton men, spreading death and confusion in the fairest groves and gardens ever planted,—let the government hasten to cast them out and make an end of them. For it must be told again and again, and be burningly borne in mind, that just now, while protective measures are being deliberated languidly, destruction and use are speeding on faster and farther every day. (363 emphases added)*

Muir emphasizes again here that the *physical* nation (as a body of land) is “nature” (an extension of the “garden” concept with which he began) – it is the “woods,” “prairies” or
“plains” that both passively and actively allows for the presence of human residents. Muir also creates a new criterion by which people identify as a member of the *symbolic* nation (the human collective that defines itself as a nation, Etienne Balibar’s “natural community”). His attention in this passage turns intently and pointedly upon the question of immigrant presence in the U.S., a dramatic shift from the rest of the text. Emphatically presenting immigrants as *natural* contributors to both the physical and the symbolic nation, Muir boldly puts forth a revised version of national belonging. He identifies these immigrants as natural developers, like birds, whose use of American land/resources allows for a productive kind of reciprocity (a mutual support) between the land and its inhabitants. He firmly roots these immigrants in both a physical and metaphorical way to the land and nation, unequivocally locating them within the American collective as *natural citizens* of its land.

At a moment when immigrants are for the most part being identified as foreign bodies within the nation, as non-citizens, Muir emphatically incorporates them, exiling instead those he names the “destroyers.” Individuals who destroy nature, “spreading death and confusion in the fairest groves and gardens ever planted,” are the same who destroy the nation as a whole, according to the logic Muir has articulated throughout his text. Those who belong, those who are members of a U.S. national body, are those who appreciate and appropriate natural resources in proper ways. They are the ones who

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7 Zitkala-Sa and Aldo Leopold, both of whom I discuss in the following chapters, also use this term “destroyers” in their writing as a way to identify those who victimize lands and/or people.
practice the “right use” of U.S. lands. He configures a natural national body and “natural community” that do not depend upon a shared place of origin, but upon a certain land use ethic.

That the climax of Muir’s conclusion about national land preserves turns to the immigrant population in the U.S. shows how questions of resource management also engage with questions and concepts of belonging. Muir’s text profoundly exemplifies how the language of environmental politics and the language of national collectivity merge and reinforce each other. Together, they participate in an important narrative that imagines national collectivity as a natural, or naturalized condition. This relationship between the emergence of organized environmental concerns and the questions of immigrant presence at the turn of the twentieth century indicates that an environmentalist sensibility helps to imagine a new national body. This version of American nationhood puts forth an eco-defined practice of citizenship. An environmentally-defined collective makes both citizens and non-citizens who live on U.S. lands “useful” via their citizen acts. They become, in this sense, resources to national development themselves. Pinchot begins *The Fight for Conservation* with an argument that uses similar logic:

The most prosperous nation of to-day is the United States. Our unexampled wealth and well-being are directly due to the superb natural resources of our country, and to the use which has been made of them by our citizens, both in the present and in the past. We are prosperous because our forefathers bequeathed to us a land of marvelous resources still unexhausted… When the natural resources of any nation become exhausted, disaster and decay in every department of national life follow as a matter of course. Therefore the conservation of natural resources is the basis, and the only permanent basis, of national success. There are other conditions, but this one lies at the foundation. (3-4)
Again, natural resources and, in particular, the way citizens use them become the bedrock of national progress. While Muir discusses the national danger of environmental misuse through biblical language, Pinchot includes the language of disease and destruction, asserting that “disaster and decay” will infect “national life” if these resources are not put to proper use. By emphasizing the resourcefulness of citizen practice, both Muir and Pinchot position individuals as useful resources themselves that produce and model national progress. Citizenship is both an environmental *practice* – something citizens *do* – and an environmental *condition* here – something citizens *are*. The citizen both enacts environmentalism while also embodying it.

Although Pinchot is directly addressing the issue of natural resource management, imbedded in this language of national “disaster and decay” is a discourse of Americanization that deals with the question of immigrant presence. As the threat of “disaster and decay” was firmly associated with both a physical and metaphorical fear of disease-bearing immigrants – that is, a fear of a physiological contagious disease and a fear of a metaphorically diseased nation – Pinchot’s conservationist rhetoric has traces of debates beyond solely environmental ethics. Pinchot does not explicitly discuss immigrants here, unlike Muir’s direct references, but his mention of disease in this context elicits the connection. While Muir’s preservationist ethic explicitly envisioned a nation inclusive of immigrants, Pinchot’s language of disease only implicitly attends to the immigrant’s position in the national body. If immigrants are to be a “useful” element
to national health and wealth rather than “disaster and decay”- producing, they, like citizens must participate in careful conservationist use of “the superb natural resources of our country,” and, like the natural resources themselves, must be put to proper “use.” Putting these human resources to good “use” eases the threat or discomfort of their presence within the nation, and, like resource management, is at the “foundation” of “national success.” I am not suggesting that Pinchot deliberately used his conservationist ethic to comment on immigration; he is, however, very clearly invested in national welfare as the galvanizing purpose for an environmental ethics and practice. What interests me is how this swapping of language and metaphor – across environmentalist thought, immigration debates and concepts of national progress – work together to operate in significant ways beyond the boundaries of conservationism.

Pinchot notes the extension of conservation to broader realms when he asserts: “While at first Conservation was supposed to apply only to forests, we see now that its sweep extends even beyond the natural resources” (41-42). He lays out three main principles of the movement – development, prevention of waste, and preservation for the “benefit of the many” – that take conservationism well beyond forest debates (even beyond natural resources) and ground it in a broad vision of use: “The first duty of the human race is to control the earth it lives upon” (46, 45). Pinchot moves constantly between these poles of “preservation” and “control,” shaping the official rhetoric of conservation as a balance between the two practices for the sake of national progress. He emphasizes “control” throughout his book, characterizing conservation as “the most
democratic movement this country has known for a generation [because it argues that]…
the people have not only the right, but the duty to control the use of the natural
resources…” (81). In Pinchot’s logic, environmental engagement is a necessary, even
obligatory, form of democratic practice. He is writing about democratic participation, but
his words seem to be at odds with the political concept of democracy. One’s “right”
instantly becomes a “duty to control,” for instance. This fluid movement from a right to
democratically participate in environmental practice into an obligation to control natural
resources hints at the strange way eco-discourse expands beyond the environmental realm
and into something applicable to human populations. When applied further than natural
resources to humans in the nation state, this dynamic between citizen participation and
control has particular implications for racial and ethnic others whose citizen status is
restricted. These subjects are asked to participate in acts of eco-democracy, but they
simultaneously are relegated to a social position in which they can be “control[led]” as
marginalized non-citizens.

The philosophies articulated by Muir and Pinchot, as I have said, gave formal
shape to environmental concerns being voiced in a collection of venues. These
environmental figures were surrounded by written work in magazines like *Ladies Home
Journal*, *The Century*, and *Atlantic Monthly* (in which their essays were featured as well),
and the literary interest in “natural history” by authors like Jack London, John Burroughs,
Frank Norris, and Mary Austin. At the same time, policy was changing the shape of the
American map. As I mentioned earlier, two major statutes initiated the transition from a
policy of privatization to one of mixed privatization and public management. The General Revision Act of 1891 limited homestead claims to 160 acres and gave the president the right to create forest preserves, leading President Harrison to set aside thirteen million acres as six national forests in 1891 and 1892, followed by President Cleveland’s creation of thirteen new national forests in 1897 (which increased the acreage from thirteen million to thirty-nine million). The Forest Management Act or Organic Administration Act of 1897 authorized the government to permanently manage and protect these preserves which meant that their use would be federally regulated.

These changes were controversial. The Forest Management Act triggered major protest in the west. Brulle notes that a rally of over 30,000 people occurred in Deadwood, South Dakota in order to protest the forest reserves, and that a bill was introduced in Congress to take the reserves out of the jurisdiction of the government and back into the public domain (119). This resentment and protest carried into the first decade of the twentieth century, and became particularly intense between 1907 and 1916. These protests came to a head in 1907 when the Public Lands Convention was held in Denver. Over 861 delegates from the western states participated and, for the first time, specific arguments were collectively articulated, demanding that the federal land be

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8 Brulle also notes that a main line of argument in their protest was a sense of elitism affecting the general public’s rights: “Governor Richards of Wyoming disdainfully denounced the creation of forest reserves, as they had been ‘created by college professors and landscape engineers’…Senator Wilson of Washington asked ‘Why should we be everlastingly and eternally harassed and annoyed and bedeviled by these scientific gentlemen from Harvard College?’” (120).
turned over to the states (Brulle 120). These protests, embodied in the convention, influenced Roosevelt’s decision to call for the Conference of Governors on Conservation.

Roosevelt had been immersed in the environmental debates for years prior to this specific moment. He and George Bird Grinnell had founded the Boone and Crockett Club in 1888 not only as a way to support the practice of big-game hunting, but to foster a sense of outdoor life as essential to “a vigorous and masterful people” (qtd. in Nash 152). As president, Roosevelt’s administration brought environmental policy to the forefront, creating the first wildlife refuge (in Pelican Island, Florida) in 1902, establishing the Forest Transfer Act in 1905 (which moved the forest reserves from under the jurisdiction of the Interior Department to the Agriculture Department and renamed them “national forests”) and the American Antiquities Act in 1906 (which allowed the president to set aside areas of historic or cultural value as “national monuments”). Between 1906 and 1910, he and President Taft proclaimed twenty-three areas as national parks, including Mesa Verde, Grand Canyon, Death Valley, Katmai and Glacier Bay.

Roosevelt’s request for a conference on the status and use of natural resources (The Conference of Governors on Conservation) has roots in a philosophy of environmental management that he had begun to develop and articulate publicly years earlier. Recording Secretary of the Conference, WJ McGee, attributes him with the first

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9 John Burroughs characterizes Roosevelt in his 1906 essay “Camping with President Roosevelt” (published in Atlantic Monthly Vol XCII, p.585-600) as “hungry for the wild and the aboriginal,” connecting him with the two qualities that Roosevelt sought to promote through the Boone and Crockett Club – the virile ability to experience the wilderness and the glorified notion of primitivism (591).
official word on natural resources when, in 1903, Roosevelt said before the Society of American Foresters (of which he was an associate member): “Your attention must be directed to the preservation of the forests, not as an end in itself, but as a means of preserving the prosperity of the Nation” (v). Roosevelt follows this nationalist position in 1907 when, before the National Editorial Association in Jamestown, he claims:

Yet hitherto as a Nation we have tended to live with an eye single to the present, and have permitted the reckless waste and destruction of much of our National wealth. The conservation of our natural resources and their proper use constitute the fundamental problem which underlies almost every other problem of our National life. Unless we maintain an adequate material basis for our civilization, we can not maintain the institutions in which we take so great and so just a pride; and to waste and destroy our natural resources means to undermine these material bases. (vi)

For Roosevelt, like the environmentalist sentiments I have been examining, natural resources were a material wealth that offered strength and exceptional status to the nation. Although it was not yet officially declared (until 1913), Roosevelt’s position clearly sits more soundly within the conservationist argument for regulated consumption expressed by Pinchot rather than the preservationist argument for the use of untouched wilderness in its own right that Muir articulated.

Roosevelt finally acted in response to a letter from the Inland Water Commission that adamantly called for federal action in the name of “the people”: “We are of the opinion that the time has come for considering the policy of conserving these material resources on which the permanent prosperity of our country and the equal opportunity of all our People must depend” (viii). In response, Roosevelt’s call for the convening of
governors also makes it a cause of “the People” and one of profound importance to the welfare of the nation:

It is obvious that the prosperity which we now enjoy rests directly upon these resources. It is equally obvious that the vigor and success which we desire and foresee for this nation in the future must have this as its ultimate material basis.…

The gravity of the situation [depletion of natural resources] must, I believe, appeal with special force on the Governors of the States, because of their close relations to the people and the responsibility for the welfare of their communities.…

The matters to be considered at this conference are not confined to any region or group of States, but are of vital concern to the Nation as a whole and to all the people…

Facts…force me to believe that the conservation of our natural resources is the most weighty question now before the people of the United States. (IX-X)

This rhetoric of resource management as the most important question facing the nation, and as one unique to their political/historical moment, is something that Roosevelt repeats over and over. “All the people” are united across divisionary lines of “region or group” and are mutually responsible for answering what Roosevelt poses as a monumental question of their time. He emphasizes this idea in his opening address at the conference when he concludes by linking resource management to patriotic practice:

Finally, let us remember that the conservation of our natural resources, though the gravest problem of today, is yet but part of another and greater problem to which this Nation is not yet awake, but to which it will awake in time, and with which it must hereafter grapple if it is to live – the problem of national efficiency, the patriotic duty of insuring the safety and continuance of the Nation.

[Applause.] When the People of the United States consciously undertake to raise themselves as citizens and the Nation and the States in their several spheres, to the highest pitch of excellence in private, State, and national life, and to do this because it is the first of all the duties of true patriotism, then and not till then the future of this Nation, in quality and in time, will be assured. [Great Applause] (12 emphases added)
Roosevelt gives expression, from the federal level, to the concepts Muir and Pinchot were articulating throughout the previous decade here. What today we would call a form of environmental activism is embraced and narrated as both a federal issue and an ultimate form of democratic practice for the citizen. Roosevelt’s speeches connect the environmentalist sensibility that underlies notions of national progress to a concept of patriotism that imagines the citizenry as engaged in the practice of safeguarding the nation. Again, citizenship becomes both a practice – something citizens do – and a condition – something citizens are themselves as resources for the nation’s welfare. This kind of eco-citizenship sustains what Roosevelt calls “safety and continuance,” and is conceptually similar to what Pinchot refers to as preventing “disaster and decay,” and what Muir sees as stopping the “spoil[ing]” of the “grandest of God’s terrestrial cities.”

The public and governmental participation in the questions of environmental practice is not just about land use. It becomes a venue through which the nation can be re-imagined, professed and legislated as an ecologically-defined and united entity. While these laws and federal actions were the start of governmental involvement in environmental practices, they are an official expression and culmination of a longer trend and narrative. Now my chapter will turn to the writings of earlier figures who were formulating the rhetorical and conceptual foundation for this federally recognized and endorsed environmentalism within seemingly different arenas of social concern.
III. The Socioecological Person, City and Nation

“There is a human as well as a plant and animal ecology.”

-Robert Ezra Park and E.W. Burgess, 1921

Many critics and environmental activists trace the early environmentalist sentiments and organization back to the transcendentalists’ interest in nature a couple of decades earlier, like that of Emerson and Thoreau, and they generally suggest that it gained momentum in this particular moment because of tremendous industrial development at this time (which created more pollution and increased clear-cutting of forests). However, the conceptual understanding of U.S. lands transforms significantly in the time between the transcendentalist and environmentalist moments, producing a vastly different vocabulary that environmentalists like Muir and Pinchot could incorporate into the official language of environmental reform.

The closing of the frontier and the discourse surrounding it in the early 1890’s allowed for the question of national progress to branch out into various realms. Expanding upon Turner’s observations and implicitly working with sentiments like those of Ernest Thompson Seton who linked the great outdoors with national virility, WJ McGee began to write about the national dilemma presented by a closed frontier. McGee’s role in this cultural moment has been largely overlooked, particularly by literary critics. His cross-disciplinary work as a glacial geologist, ethnologist, anthropologist, explorer and erosion expert is a useful example of the ways in which the
burgeoning development of academic disciplines and environmentalist interests intersected during this moment.\textsuperscript{10} After moving through multiple positions, McGee began the final leg of his career in 1909 when he became an executive member – Vice Chairman and Secretary – of Gifford Pinchot’s National Conservation Commission. Although it has not been discussed widely, WJ McGee played a significant role in the early environmental movement. His close work with Pinchot helped form the central components of conservationist thought, and Pinchot called him the “scientific brains behind the conservation movement.”\textsuperscript{11} As he moved in and out of government and academic work, McGee contributed significantly to the cultural and professional narratives of national belonging circulating at this time.

McGee’s problematic conceptualization of race and ethnicity that provides the bedrock for his notions of national development cannot be separated entirely from his

\textsuperscript{10} McGee began his career as a glacial geologist on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 1889, and his introduction to anthropology came in 1893 when John Wesley Powell hired him to be the head ethnologist for the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE). He explored the Isla del Tiburón where the Seri Indians lived in 1895; he was the president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science from 1897 through 1898, president of the American Anthropological Association from 1902 through 1912, and president of the National Geographic Society from 1904 to 1905. Forced out of his position in the BAE in 1903 because of his controversial fiscal (mis)management, McGee remained a central figure in the field by accepting an offer to organize the Anthropology Department at the St. Louis exposition in 1904, a position that Lee Baker suggests gave him “the opportunity to fashion a national identity out of his idea of racial progress” (65). He then became an erosion expert in the Bureau of Soils in the Department of Agriculture in 1907, Secretary of the Inland Waterways Commission and the recording Secretary at the 1908 Conference of Governors on Conservation.

role in the formulation of formal environmental thought. The overlap in his anthropology, his particular concepts of national progress, and his conservationist ethic highlights how the formalization of environmental thought in this moment synthesizes multiple discourses, making environmentalism a political realm in which an intertwined collection of concerns are merging and being articulated. Examining McGee’s work as a critical component in conservationism (as Pinchot described it) points to how an environmentalist sensibility is being put to use as a means to define certain members of the national body in potentially deeply problematic ways.

In “National Growth and National Character,” which was delivered for the National Geographic Society and published for *National Geographic Magazine* in 1899, McGee, like Turner, tracks American progress in correlation with both territorial expansion and racial hybridization. But the differences in McGee’s formulation of these two processes points to a change in how the relationship between the U.S. citizen and land was being conceptualized in this moment. McGee develops an evolutionary hierarchy interwoven with newly defined land use practices. Moving through stages of savagery, barbarism, civilization and imperialism to finally reach enlightenment is a process of not only what McGee calls “blood-blending and culture-commingling,” but also one dependent upon a particular use of national lands (202). Shifting the discussion from talk of the *frontier* to talk of *wilderness*, McGee moves beyond Turner’s concern over the national stasis he fears a closed frontier will enforce. This rhetorical move
reconfigures the frontier problem, instead, as a national responsibility to use wilderness in certain ways.

McGee begins to lay out this argument by showing how the construction of the United States as a nation is the result of “forc[ing] the forests, ma[king] conquest of the wilderness,” an act which emerged out of “the ceaseless stimulus of individual freedom… toward conquest over lower nature – or over any alien nation that might stand in the way” (197). McGee points to the Louisiana Purchase as a prime example of this national progress, emphasizing that the combination of “force” and natural progression (“ceaseless stimulus”) over both space and peoples is a particularly American characteristic:

…[T]he splendid states into which Louisiana was reconstructed form a still nobler monument to American citizenship – they were acquired by the people themselves for the use of the people forever. The acquisition of Louisiana and Oregon reflected a national character made up of individual characters shaped during a hundred generations; at the same time it proved a power in further shapement of both personal and national character. Confronted by new problems and enlarged fields of activity, the pioneers turned toward fresh conquest of nature: They pushed over the plains… [T]hey felled forests, and began the development of the world’s greatest lumbering industry; they broke the virgin soil, converting the profitless acres into fertile fields and inaugurating a world-epoch of agriculture… [T]hey cut canals more energetically than any other people has ever done…[T]he citizens were enabled to look down on lower nature from ever-new and ever higher points of vantage… [T]hat quick outpushing of the bounds of American faculty, set the personal and national pulse athrob…The acquisitions of 1803-1805 changed the map of a continent; they wrought far deeper change in the mind and character of Americans. (197-198 emphases added)

McGee frames labor on the land as necessary in order to transform natural elements into specific resources for human welfare. Such land labor is a testament to Americanness – a
“monument to American citizenship” – that is a marker of a national past, but, more importantly is a promise for the future of the nation. The individual and collective pulse of the citizens and the nation – that which keeps them “athrob” – is not just frontier expansion as Turner argued, but this very specifically American consumption of that frontier wilderness for agricultural and industrial development. McGee extends Turner’s “advance of the frontier” into a new concept, the “fresh conquest of nature.” While Turner saw Americans’ relationship with national lands as an historically closed act, then, McGee presents it as an ongoing practice, and he emphasizes that sustaining it is the essence of both personal and collective Americanness.

McGee begins his move towards a conclusion with a discussion of the “white-skinned man” who has reached enlightenment and whose responsibility it is to lift the “dark-skinned man,” “the world’s weaklings,” up in the evolutionary ranks: “… [I]t is the self-taxed task of the white giant to lift darker fellows to liberty’s plane rapidly as the duller eyes can be trained to bear the stronger light” (205). While McGee suggests racial uplift – what Baker calls McGee’s “anthropological version of the White man’s burden” (69) – he follows in the same breath with the suggestion that “lower nature” be “subjugate[d].” McGee offers a concluding prescription for how and who can maintain the land use practice he has laid out:

…[F]or in the enlightenment, much more than civilization, it is the duty of the strong man to subjugate lower nature, to extirpate the bad and cultivate the good among living things, to delve in earth below and cleave the air above in search of fresh resources, to transform the seas into paths for ship and pastures for food-fishes, to yoke fire and lightning…to halter thin vapors and harness turbulent
waters unto servile subjection, and in all ways to enslave the world for the support of humanity and the increase of human intelligence. (205 emphases added)

His fusion of “subjugat[ion],” “extirpat[ion],” and “cultivat[ion]” allows him to suggest that entities of a “lower nature” be mined for their usefulness; that is, “lower nature,” through a process of submission, absorption and development becomes a “fresh resourc[e]” for the U.S. and its evolving character. McGee is emphatic in his argument that resources be put to complete service, that they be put into “servile subjection” and “enslave[d]” for a national benefit. McGee is, at once, fashioning a new concept of land use and promoting a vision of national progress that relies upon it. Although the phrase is used a number of times throughout his essay, McGee’s call here to “subjugate” makes the clearest link between national lands and peoples of racial and ethnic difference, all of which he has identified previously in his essay as of a “lower nature.”

We begin to see here an important pattern emerging in this moment along with (and, for the most part, even prior to) organized environmentalism— not only the land, but the people living on U.S. lands become rhetorically framed as resources for nationalistic purposes. McGee makes this paradigm rhetorically possible by reimagining U.S. wilderness as resource and by reconceptualizing its use as a national responsibility to be practiced specifically by the “strong” citizen. McGee’s rhetoric updates the environmental concepts expressed exactly ten years earlier (in 1889) by Robert Underwood Johnson in The Century. In his editorial, “How to Preserve the Forest,” Johnson suggests that American lands are “capable of great productiveness” (312). He
offers a basic sense of how “wilderness is transformed into a fruitful and populous country” by water (312), and suggests in “Trees in America” that “[t]o save our forests and landscapes and administer them widely, we must love them, and to love them we must know them” (311). McGee transforms this initial environmentalist call for public attention to nature by reconceptualizing Johnson’s idea of a move from “wilderness” to “country” as not only a natural phenomenon, but also as a citizen-based act of national progress.

As the U.S. is no longer able to expand territorially in its domestic space, McGee expands and opens up the frontier-based concept of progress. He begins to recenter the notion of national progress and character around specific environmental practices. As a result, McGee participates in a discussion of land-as-resource, helping both to narrativize and to lay the conceptual groundwork for the environmental policy beginning to emerge. McGee’s blood discourse and vision of a strong nation-state as one whose environmental resources are “cultivate[d]” by the “strong,” though, bring a deeply problematic concept of race into this notion of eco-progress.

McGee’s version of nationalism based upon a land use ethic stems from an essay he published a bit earlier in 1896. McGee begins “The Relation of Institutions to the Environment” with the premise that the “organism, as individual species or larger group” is not solely a product of “heredity,” but also shaped “through interaction with
environment” (701). He shows the effects of the environment on the human organism by portraying the non-human experience of forest and desert plant-life, arguing that “development, differentiation, [and] transformation, are no less characteristic of the human genus than of lower organisms – indeed, it is in this noblest of organisms that plasticity or adjustability to diverse conditions culminate” (704-705). Rather than using this argument as a simple support for Lamarckian ideas of environmental conditioning, McGee begins to make a claim that this process extends much further than the adaptability (the “plasticity” or “adjustability”) of an “organism,” and is, instead, telling of the way these organisms find a place in a larger entity. For him, the essential elements of the dynamic between organism, specifically “lower organism,” and environment in particular are the “organization” and “cooperation” of multiple parts into the formation of a united whole:

…the career of the individual is in large measure subordinate to the career of the group; and since the parts of the group are interrelated, while groups are related among each other, the essential unit is the organization rather than the organism…. Since the organisms are molded by interaction with the same physical agencies, they grow toward likeness in form and function to the extent that unrelated organisms assume similar characters. Finally, since the organisms are engaged in common strife, they spontaneously fall into a cooperation through which each assists alien neighbors in such manner that all are united against the common enemies… (705, 706)

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12 This speech was delivered to the Smithsonian Institution in May of 1896 by Frank Hamilton Cushing in McGee’s absence, and then published in The Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution that same year.
McGee makes an anthropological argument out of the science of ecological processes here. He correlates plant-life of both forests and deserts with human identity particularly by connecting their acts of organized and cooperative existence. More important than the individual “organism,” he argues, is the “unit” or “group” to which it adheres itself. McGee’s vision of cooperation reads simultaneously as both a social organization and an ecological one. This smooth collapse of different processes – the formation of a human social system and an ecological system – has particular, even if implicitly expressed, consequences for human subjects whom he argues will “grow toward likeness” and “assume similar characteristics.”

McGee’s specific reference to “alien neighbors” undoubtedly would have drawn an immediate connection to the immigrant population in this moment. This association indicates how McGee’s reasoning stretches a social Darwinian notion of hierarchy into an ecological model of belonging/alienation to engage implicitly with the question of immigrant presence in the nation. McGee also uses the word “alien” at the start of his essay, suggesting that “alien plants are smothered” so that the forest may thrive (701). An alien species, as we now know, is one not native to its environment that, once relocated to a foreign land, can cause severe ecological change or damage to the natural ecological stasis. McGee uses this concept to argue that “alien neighbors,” like “alien plants,” can be “smothered” within the nation forest, which ultimately allows these

13 Keep in mind, too, that this term surfaces in “National Growth and National Character” as “alien nation,” which we saw earlier.

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“unrelated organisms [to] assume similar characters” and “to grow toward likeness.”

When McGee revises this environmental concept into one of social cooperativeness, he attempts to position the “alien” within a positive process of community-building. He moves well beyond his initial metaphor of “alien plants [being] smothered” by ultimately conceptualizing an ecological union:

Thus the cooperation among the living things of the desert begins in tolerance and ends in solidarity— a solidarity so perfect and far-reaching that no organism exists beyond it, that every organism within its bounds is directly or indirectly dependent on its advantages, and that the sum of life is multiplied through its beneficence. There are also several kinds of cooperation depending on intimacy and union... Thus the cooperation beginning in simple tolerance sometimes ends in bodily union—a union so complete that the component organisms are transformed unto each other and transfigured into an exalted unity far transcending individual or specific quality. (707)

His repeated use of terms like “tolerance,” “transform,” “transfigure,” and “cooperation” in connection with “organisms” throughout his essay creates a vocabulary of social ecology in which matters ecological slip somewhat seamlessly into matters socio-cultural. This type of vocabulary works well to engage with questions of the immigrant population and urban environment. It is a vocabulary that situates marginalized identities and geographies within a framework of natural processes, rectifying these problematic presences by making them a beneficial part of an ecologized national body. Ultimately, McGee imagines this bodily union as a process of “blending” organisms with the “inorganic external” (702). He emphasizes the unit formed of separate parts as a synthesis of organisms not only with each other but with the environment in which they thrive. Like ecological intermingling, this process one of social symbiosis. McGee
concludes his narrative of social ecological cooperation with this metaphor of “fertilization”: “As institutions grow and spread they are fertilized and ennobled by contact with one another” (710 emphases mine). The ecological act of fertilization analogizes the processes of “grow[ing]” and “spread[ing]” a national body.

While McGee surely was influenced by Darwinian and Lamarckian ideas to a certain extent, his concept of a social ecology sits intimately alongside the emerging science of plant ecological studies. Although the term “ecology” was coined just after Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) in 1866 by German zoologist Ernst Heinrich Haeckel in his book *General Morphology*, it was not put into scientific use and conceptual argument until 1895 when the Danish botanist Eugenius Warming wrote the pioneer text on plant ecology, *Plantesamfund* (which was later published in English as *Oecology of Plants; An Introduction to the Study of Plant Communities* in 1909). Warming’s work made it to the classrooms and ecological studies of the United States immediately upon its publication. John M. Coulter, leading American botanist, head of the newly established Department of Botany at the University of Chicago, and friend of the famous Harvard botanist Asa Gray, inspired graduate student Henry Chandler Cowles to learn Danish and ultimately to combine geology and botany. Cowles’s thesis “The Ecological Relations of the Vegetation on the Sand Dunes of Lake Michigan,” written in 1898, put forth his earliest theory of vegetational succession. His thesis had tremendous impact immediately when it was published serially in 1899 as “Ecological Relations” in the *Botanical Gazette*, and Cowles became known as the first professional American

Cowles’s influence continued as a teacher and as a co-founder of the Ecological Society of America in 1914, organized to bring together biologists and zoologists studying ecological communities. Cowles also led a group of American ecologists in hosting the International Phytogeographic Excursion in the United States from July to September 1913. The Excursion brought leading European botanical experts on a scientific tour of natural environments in the United States. Arthur Tansely, an English botanist and ecologist wrote of the tour:

> Future generations will be slow to forgive us for the wholesale and often wanton destruction that goes on at present almost unchecked… and [they will be] quick to applaud the actions and to reverence the memories of those who have done something to preserve their heritage of natural beauty. . . . [H]ere and there tracts of original untouched nature can and should be preserved for the enjoyment and use of our successors, without in any way checking general and inevitable economic development. This is work which ought to be undertaken by the community, and indeed the great national and the smaller state ‘parks’ of the west - three of which were visited by the international party - are a sign that America is awake to her responsibilities to the future in this matter. (*Ecology and the American Environment*)

We see how ecological studies and the movement to preserve/conserve natural lands converge in this sentiment. Perhaps it is not surprising that the new study of ecology would inspire the burgeoning environmental ideas and practices emerging
simultaneously. However, it seems more important to notice, one, how these concepts and language were being articulated elsewhere, and, two, how the new discourse of plant ecology sounds strikingly similar to talk of immigration and naturalization processes.

Warming develops a study of plant communities based on the ecological relationship between plants, animals and the environmental conditions in which they live. Although Warming’s studies focus on plants, a conceptual connection between the scientific language of ecology and the rhetoric of nation formation in the U.S. right at this moment indicates how an environmental sensibility enabled not only the organization of environmentalism but also a convergence of issues like resource management, Americanization, and urban reform. In his discussion of plant communities, Warming argues for a paradoxical strength and potential danger of plant communities comprised solely of one species:

The term ‘community’ implies a diversity but at the same time a certain organized uniformity in the units. The units are the many individual plants that occur in every community… That a congregation of individuals belonging to one species into one community may be profitable to the species, is evident; it may obviously in several ways aid in maintaining the existence of the species, for instance, by facilitating abundant and certain fertilization… and maturation of seeds… But on the other hand it brings with it greater danger of serious damage and devastation wrought by parasites. (91-92)

While mono-plant communities allow for fertility and survival, they also are at risk of disease. Warming’s ecological theory rectifies this risk by explaining that complete vegetational development requires the growth of varied species upon the same plot of land:
The case of a community consisting of individuals belonging to one species is, strictly speaking, scarcely ever met with; but the dominant individuals of a community may belong to a single species…In general, many species grow side by side, and many different growth-forms and types of symbiosis…are found collected in a community. For even when one species occupies an area as completely as the nature of the soil will permit, other species can find room and can grow between its individuals; in fact, if the soil is to be completely covered the vegetation must necessarily always be heterogeneous. (93)

Warming’s analysis shows plant communities to be zones of mutual sustenance, or of “symbiosis.” The “heterogeneity” that results from “other species” taking root in between “dominant individuals” is resolved by a “symbiosis in which species are most intimately and firmly linked, that is to say organically united” (84). A well-used land requires a symbiotic relationship between heterogeneous species such that an organic unity can be formed naturally.

Cowles credits Warming with changing the terminology from “plant formation” to “plant society,” which marks an important distinction between the development of a plant species and the processes of making plant communities out of multiple species. This distinction helps Cowles define ecology as “essentially a study of origins and life histories, having two well-marked phases; one phase is concerned with the origin and development of plant structures, the other with the origin and development of plant societies or formations. The plant structure side again has two aspects, one viewing organs or plant forms as a whole, the other viewing the tissues which make up the organs; the former might be called organographic ecology, while the latter might be called ecological anatomy” (73-74). Here, Cowles scientifically defines “organographic
ecology” as the composition of the whole plant, and “ecological anatomy” as the composition of each of the parts that make up the parts that comprise the whole.

Plant ecologist Frederic Clements extends these concepts when, in 1916, he proposed that a plant community be seen as a “superorganism.” According to Clements’s theory, a plant community, like an individual organism (a single plant or animal), is comprised of multiple interrelated parts. Each of these parts is vital to the proper function of the whole organism. In addition to the superorganism, Clements also put forth the concept of ecological succession.\(^{14}\) He argued that all bare lands produce new vegetational communities (except ones with extreme climates), and that they give rise to the same stable associations of plant species which he named the “climax state.” Clements’s ideas of the superorganism and succession suggest that plant communities are not fixed or static, but are dynamic entities constantly in flux (at least until they reach their climax states).

Although Warming’s, Cowles’s and Clements’s ideas of plant community formation and the language they use to explain it are scientific concepts of ecological development, they are remarkably similar to the vocabulary being used to describe the presence of ethnic and racial subjects in the United States. These definitions of ecology

\(^{14}\) The history of the term and concept of “succession” is a particularly interesting one from a literary critic’s perspective. French naturalist Adolphe Dureau de la Malle was the first to use the word in 1825 in his study on the clear-cutting of forest trees. Zoologist and biologist Johannes Japetus Smith Steenstrup followed Malle’s use of the term. In the United States, though, the figure to use this term decades prior to Clements was Henry David Thoreau. In 1860, Thoreau gave an address to an agricultural society entitled “The Succession of Forest Trees” in which he described succession in an Oak-Pine forest. Thoreau’s address is cited as the source from which Clements adapted his concept of succession.
and ecological interconnection express a notion also being articulated in other venues to define the processes of human community formation and to explain the process of cultural assimilation. For instance, McGee’s arguments about “alien nation,” “alien neighbors” and “alien plants” – which link land use practice and resource management with concern about ethnic difference – mirror these scientific studies of ecological development through both vocabulary and concepts. This rhetorical and conceptual overlap points to a discursive trend happening in the U.S. that defines the shape and function of national human communities as similar to those of an ecological unit. This new language of ecology helps us to see how writers like McGee are defining a sociological version of adaptability that makes the nation a *socioecological* unit. In this way, McGee’s metaphors of organicism and adaptability move beyond Darwinian and Lamarckian philosophies and ground themselves in a contemporaneous understanding of ecological interconnectedness. Associating national life with plant development allows for a discussion of the incorporation of difference within a broader system without explicitly addressing the urban immigrant. I do not intend to suggest that McGee drew explicitly from Warming’s, Crowles’s, or Clements’s studies, or even that he was thoroughly familiar with the study of plant ecology that Warming launched in the United States. Instead, I am pointing out that these concepts were emerging contemporaneously and mutually reinforcing each other in a public arena.

These shared interests across disciplines in relationships between living entities and their environments, the language of “adjustability” and “symbiosis,” and the concepts
of heterogeneous organic unity would be taken up and extended years later by Chicago sociologists to address concerns about urban environments. Robert Ezra Park in particular developed an urban ecology, and the reasoning and language of his first publication in 1916 indicate how the late nineteenth and early twentieth century concepts that I have been tracking here were circulating not only in a scientific realm but also among prominent social thinkers as well. In his studies of urban environments, particularly in his ideas about a symbiosis and an interdependence between citizens and geographies, Park created an ecologically-defined “biotic community.”¹⁵ Park argues in his first essay, “The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment” (1916), “…we may, if we choose, think of the city, that is to say, the place and the people, with all the machinery and administrative devices that go with them, as organically related; a kind of psychophysical mechanism in and through which private and political interests find not merely collective but a corporate expression” (14 emphasis added). In his formulation, the city becomes a living, organic entity that actively brings into synthesis its human inhabitants and their urban environment.

Priscilla Wald notes that “The socio-physical bond that Park would subsequently label the ‘common and public existence’ represented not only social interaction, but also a new entity: not a social body, which he understood as individuals’ acting jointly, but a new organism (as in Le Bon’s formulation) that transformed as it ‘collected’ these

¹⁵ Park’s term “biotic” becomes firmly grounded in environmentalist writing decades later by Aldo Leopold who names the “biotic citizen.” I will discuss this adopted term in Chapter 4.
individuals” (134). Park’s concept of an urban environment as one of organic
corporation acts as the bedrock for much of his later work. That this type of rhetorical
frame describes the city might seem strange, since urban areas, as built environments, are
predominantly lacking in the natural. We can see how Park’s arguments draw from a
trend of environmental thought present in the language of plant ecology. As I have been
arguing, it is one that Warming initiated and McGee used to imagine national welfare
through a land use ethic. How this language came to produce a metaphor of organic
connection between people and the city, though, requires an additional piece. I will turn
now to the writings of city activists who deliberated this very issue at the same time as
McGee was seizing upon plant-ecology to define national progress and prowess.

IV. Urban Social Reform and the Organic Community

“And where have I lived since I left the slums?
My favorite abode is a tent in the wilderness…”

-Mary Antin, *The Promised Land*, 1912

Urban reformism during the Progressive Era also engaged in debates about land
use. Reformers associated the urban environment with nature and natural elements
through a discourse of democratic participation. The City Beautiful movement
exemplifies the emerging rhetorical link between urban centers and nature sites.
Reformers asserted that a connection between these two realms (the built city and nature)
would provide the physical and moral leverage necessary to uplift immigrant-inhabited city areas perceived to be decaying and diseased. Taking inspiration from the “White City” at the World Columbian Exposition of 1893 – which Edward W. Soja identifies as an “originary moment” that “crystallized the utopian possibilities of industrial capitalist modernization as a progressive force and positioned the pragmatic ‘city planner’ as a heroic figure in American modernism” – the movement initially centered around Chicago and Washington D.C. and lasted until 1909 (85-86).

Two important strains of the movement emerged during that time, indicating the divergent political positions regarding urban space. Two organizations led the City Beautiful Movement – The American Park and Outdoor Association, organized in 1893, and the American League for Civic Improvement, organized in 1902, which merged in 1904 to form the American Civic Association. These organizations allowed activists and the general public to engage in “important debates about the meaning of public space, and these debates led to deeper questions about urban democracy” (Mattson 17). The sentiments behind their argument for beautification (specifically for the use of parks), for the most part, actually grew out of and promoted an antiurbanism, as Mattson notes: “Activists who hated the city saw in parks a way of reintroducing features of nature and the pastoral countryside into urban areas…For this group of city activists the urban public was something to be feared, contained, and managed…. [They saw] parks as a necessary evil that aided the processes of social control” (17). Activists who articulated the second strain within this movement sought to highlight the positive features of cities in order to
argue against antiurbanist sentiment. In particular, Charles Zueblin, who began his career in progressive reform at Jane Addams’s social settlement Hull House and later became the president of the American League for Civic Improvement, saw the city as a site of tremendous democratic possibility. Public awareness and urban activism produced a “new civic spirit” particularly in cities, according to Zueblin, and it was this “new social spirit” that would engage citizens in the vitalization of urban-centered “democracy, fraternity, [and] freedom of social expression” (A Decade 11).

Between 1903 and 1905, Zueblin articulated his concept of urban democracy in The Chautauquan and in his book A Decade of Civic Development (which included a reprint of the three essays previously published in The Chautauquan). The very order of his essays from “The Training of the Citizen” (1903), to “The Making of the City” (1903), to “The Return to Nature” (1904) characterizes a conceptual and physical link among citizen, city and nature, the same kind of link I have been examining in ecological, anthropological and sociological theories as well. Firmly grounding his first essay in the progressive education issue, Zueblin asserts that we must “prepare our future citizens for life in a democracy” (161). Suggesting that “citizenship is not to be attained by mere attention to the ballot,” Zueblin puts forth a democratic practice modeled by “the child in the kindergarten in his common relations with other children – all struggling toward the goal of the perfection of the fullest capacities of each” (162-3). In contrast to the pervasive belief that geographical interconnection with the city puts the national body at risk of social contagion, this idea reconfigures the concept of interconnectedness as a
positive thing for the nation, similar to the way ecological studies explain how heterogeneous vegetation grows into an organic community. Zueblin opens access to citizenship as an act to be practiced by all inhabitants of the United States.\textsuperscript{16} Contextualizing Zueblin’s ideas in the nativist sentiments of its moment allows us to see how the subjects of these passages could have been read as not only America’s youth, but also as immigrant populations who have yet to be naturalized. Although perhaps different from the set of inhabitants to whom he directly refers, they comprise a set of potential “future citizens” about whom readers would have been significantly concerned in this moment.

While Zueblin outwardly denounced nativist sentiments, the implicit presence of immigrant persons in this type of configuration is paradoxically both promising and restrictive; promising in that it allows for a vision of their positive connectedness to the body of the nation and it points to a potential citizenship in the future, and restrictive because it also suggests that these “future citizens” do not necessarily need to have the official rights that come along with citizenship, here specifically access “to the ballot”: “Citizenship is learned from experience, not from books. One can be a citizen only by participation, and that not merely in the annual casting of the ballot, but in daily citizenship. The futility of silk-stocking politics is a constant reminder that mere

\textsuperscript{16} For a thorough discussion of social contagion, see Priscilla Wald’s book \textit{Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative}, particularly the chapter entitled “Communicable Americanism: Social Contagion and Urban Spaces.”
intellectual capacity is no guarantee of good citizenship” (165). Zueblin’s configuration of democracy as a product of “daily citizenship” implicitly calls his readers to imagine a version of national collectivity based on participatory democracy, one that works from the bottom up to provide a sound foundation for the entrance and the inclusion of yet-to-be-citizens (envisioned as children).

Zueblin geographically positions the birth of this type of democratic practice and possibility in the urban arena, the site in which the “new civic spirit [finds] expression” (“The Making of the City” 267). He makes this final move in “The Return to Nature.” He equates urban life with farm life, asserting that a city is not “contrary to nature” as most citizens believe (257). Rather, he goes so far as to argue that “[t]he city is symbolically, as well as etymologically, the basis of civilization” (257). Although he positions the progress of American civilization in the city, Zueblin continues to emphasize the significance of interconnectedness between parts of a whole as necessary to this development, focusing this time on regional interdependence – between “city, suburb, country” – rather than just between local, individual citizens. The symbol he uses to portray this interconnection is movement which he identifies as the means

17 Liberty Hyde Bailey’s Report in the Commission on Country Life in 1911 argues the opposite: “I warn my countrymen that the great recent progress made in city life is not a full measure of our civilization; for our civilization rests at bottom on the wholesomeness, the attractiveness, and the completeness, as well as the prosperity, of life in the country. The men and women on the farms stand for what is fundamentally best and most needed in our American life.” Although Zueblin and Bailey argue for the relevance of different land sites, they are engaged in a shared discourse and line of thought that makes forms of land use and the citizens who participate in particular land use practices representative of an ideal Americanness.
through which cultural, social, and environmental swapping can occur between segments of the national collective: “It is a happy feature, therefore, of our time that the transit, which is socializing rural districts, is resulting also in the naturalization of the city” (257). This is an exceptional moment in his essay – he brings into line the notions of socialization, naturalization, and geographical positioning in order to transform the city from a problematically industrial zone into a natural site within the national geography. Zueblin crafts an industrial metaphor of importing and exporting into one of natural exchange and growth, making his analogy of naturalizing urbanness implicitly read like a process of seeding, particularly like a kind of cross-pollination. It is in this ecological process that national collectivity is ideally expressed: “Trees, lawn, vines, shrubs, flowers are the one touch of nature which are doing their part toward making the whole town kin. Indeed the movement beginning with the desire for natural beauty and reaching the comprehensive ideal of city-making is one of the finest expression of the cooperative spirit to be found in America today” (259). Nature – not just any nature, but specifically the natural element nurtured in the city – is put to productive use here as a democracy-making, “kin”-making tool. Zueblin gives nature the critical job of sealing the citizenry into a communal unit.

Zueblin’s vision of an industrious naturalization of the city reflects the contemporaneous environmental ethics that Pinchot and Muir were producing only a couple of years earlier. Although all three essentially are arguing for different outcomes, they all combine a language and concepts of nature, industry, democratic engagement and

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national progress. The ideals of national progress that Muir and Pinchot brought into their organized environmental ethics, that Roosevelt endorsed on a federal level, and that McGee expressed in connection with a land use ethic show up again here. Zueblin begins the conclusion of his essay (which also is the final chapter in and conclusion of his book) by quoting and commenting on nature writer John Burroughs: “‘Nature is all things to all men.’ If we will enslave her, she will be our servant, although when abused she may desert and starve us” (265). Use nature well, he seems to suggest, as it offers a promise of democratic progress— one that has the power, if put to proper use, to revitalize the city as a center of national progress rather than national decay. Ultimately, Zueblin ecologizes urban development in that he not only makes the city a natural zone, but he positions it as a critical figure in natural processes of an ecological national development. He sees the city as a necessary and beneficial participant in the same sort of fertilization of the nation to which McGee referred when he said “As institutions grow and spread they are fertilized and enobled by contact with one another.”

Zueblin’s idea of citizenship as a “daily” practice that, along with nature, aids in constituting a sound democracy resonates, too, in the environmentalist construction of citizenship as both an environmental practice and an environmental condition. Contextualizing Zueblin’s language and concepts in the environmentalist sentiment pervasive across disciplinary lines at this time allows us to see how his symbol of the “common relations” between children, an interconnectedness that he presents with his concepts of nature, formulates an image like that of the socioecological organism. I alter
Lauren Berlant’s sense of “infantile” or “naïve” citizenship a bit here to demonstrate how the “kindergarten[er]” (and implicitly the yet to be naturalized immigrant) has significant ecological and environmental elements that root citizenship and nationhood in ecological procedures and a naturalized practice.

Although I note implicit reference, Zueblin’s concept of democracy does not directly address problematic “slum” areas and their immigrant inhabitants. Social reformer and leader of the settlement movement, Jane Addams, makes this an explicit mission, and her writing positions them both within an ecological system as well, showing how unnatural urban zones and their inhabitants can be imagined as natural and necessary constituents of a larger interdependent ecological unit. That Jane Addams was the first woman appointed to the position of Sanitary Inspector of the 19th ward in 1894 indicates how matters of public health, immigrant population, environmental conditions, and citizen participation were closely connected. Addams delves into the sanitation problems and refuse management of the settlement and city in Twenty Years at Hull House (1910). In the chapter “Public Activities and Investigations,” Addams gives a narration of how she assumed the position of garbage inspector, how she organized women to investigate the correlation between an absurdly high death rate and sanitation in their neighborhood, how she motivated them to participate in public clean ups, and how they uncovered a city street from eighteen inches of refuse. Addams constructs a cultural and practical difference between immigrants’ native countries and the United States by marking a distinction in the way environmental practices are carried out:
One of the striking features of our neighborhood… was the presence of huge wooden garbage boxes fastened to the street pavement in which the undisturbed refuse accumulated day by day. The system of garbage collecting was inadequate throughout the city, but it became the greatest menace in a ward such as ours where the normal amount of waste was much increased by the decayed fruit and vegetables discarded by the Italian and Greek food peddlers… During our first three years on Halsted Street, we had established a small incinerator at Hull-House and we had many times reported the untoward conditions of the ward to the City Hall. We had also arranged many talks for the immigrants, pointing out that although a woman may sweep her own doorstep in her native village and allow the refuse to innocently decay in the open air and sunshine, in a crowded city quarter, if the garbage is not properly collected and destroyed, a tenement-tenant only keep their own houses clean, but must also help the authorities to keep the city clean. (164, 165 emphases added)

Addams builds her argument in this passage around a sense of awareness-raising. In calling these women to make a collective public practice out of the individualized, private act of maintaining cleanliness in the home, she extends Victorian standards not only to encourage, but to rhetorically and physically move these individual women out of the private home and into a public position of environmentally activist work. Ultimately, Addams sees this local sanitation work (in terms of its political organization and its physical practice) as “a public spirit which had ‘made good’” (168). She points to this environmental problem as particular to the United States, especially to its cities, and she offers a certain form of response that allows for both environmental change and democratic possibility – her vision configures environmental practice as both an individual and communal responsibility that engages immigrant women as citizen agents. This move is both daring and safe; while it dares to not only bring women, but immigrant women, into the citizenry, it safely positions this process as one of urban clean-up,
situating these women and their acts within a geographic realm perceived to be suitable for them.

This passage and its larger implications indicate on the most basic level that Addams herself was profoundly invested in the link between an environmental living space and the condition of the bodies dependent upon that space, and that she located power in the hands of the local citizens themselves. It not only situates Addams within a certain set of progressivist concerns with which settlement house workers are connected commonly (i.e., public health and urban sanitation), but it also begins to suggest how Addams’s work (including her writing) can be seen as environmentally-charged. The link that Addams acknowledges between class status, immigrant identity and living conditions, and her call for women to engage specifically in an environmentalist practice indicates how an emerging environmental movement also provided an arena in which democratic participation could be actively practiced and extended to individuals/communities who, otherwise, did not have such privileges or rights. It is partially in this way that Addams begins to dismantle the image of immigrants and urban dwellers as problematic inhabitants of the nation – by staging their cultural, ethnic, and geographical differences as a set of social practices to be adapted. Addams suggests that, with practical alteration will come the practice and understanding of American identity. This concept sits alongside multiple narratives (the most important of which was written many years earlier than this particular passage) that position her subjects as productive members of a
national body, not through socialization alone, but through an expanded notion of adaptability and its result – organic citizenship.

Although Addams’s name often is critically connected with the public health movement, it has not been fully equated with the birth of the conservation movement. Historian Harold L. Platt does suggest that Addams was an “urban environmentalist” invested particularly in “issues of environmental justice in the city” (1). He goes on to assert the critical relevance of his environmentally-focused methodology, “Environmental perspectives on urban politics can help situate ethnicity, patronage, and machines within broader, more inclusive frames of analysis…. The application of the wider lens of an environmental approach to Addams’s campaign to clean up the slums offers an opportunity to gain fresh insight on the political formation of urban space and the related process of spatial segregation by ethnicity, class, (and race)” (2). Implicit in Platt’s understanding of Addams as an environmental justice activist is an important observation that her social work in the Chicago tenements politically linked environmental conditions with class, ethnic, and/or racial statuses. Although there are problematic elements about Addams’s own investment in what we now know as environmental justice issues, I agree with Platt’s sense that investigating her work through an environmental frame helps to recognize how urban space is affected by the politics of ethnic, class and racial statuses as well as how individual and communal identities are shaped by urban formation. The interrelation between environmentalist politics and the politics of identity in Addams’s work (to which Platt alludes) demands
that critics, too, must address her work as multidimensional and critically complex. A literary critical, specifically an ecocritical, reading of her work uncovers how her stories of the urban settlement and its inhabitants help to construct a concept of ecological belonging brewing within a broader narrative of national collectivity.

Addams creates an actual “natural community” in which the immigrant thrives and finds his place within the greater nation. She argues that democracy “must be brought about by the people themselves; that there was no other capital fund upon which to draw… [and] that the people themselves were the great resource of the country” (22). She begins to present citizens as “resources” – here, economic national resources, a “capital fund” – that can be drawn upon to contribute to the evolution of the democratic nation. This language of “resource” as nationally useful is one of the main rhetorical components of environmentalism at this time, as I have shown, and Addams uses this environmental language to envision a “national community” in which her subjects share membership. While Zueblin’s industrial-turned-ecological metaphor works to rhetorically frame the city as a naturalized zone, Addams’s resource metaphors work to literally naturalize people within this zone (and, by extension, the nation as a whole). Addams regularly turns to and builds upon her concept of a citizen-resource throughout her text, and she strengthens this image by connecting it with the language of nature. Addams, like Muir and Pinchot, tries to show the value of a population to a national community (for Addams it is explicitly a human population and for Muir and Pinchot it is a natural population, forests in particular). But while Muir and Pinchot use urban
metaphors to stage nature sites as industrially "useful," Addams does the reverse – she uses nature metaphors to stage the tenement zones and their inhabitants as "useful."

In order to present the tenement areas as nationally useful, Addams has two rhetorical tasks: First, she must reconcile urbanness with naturalness – for, where are the trees, the flowers, the mountains, the natural American splendor to glorify? And, second, she has to make natural the inhabitants of these areas who, in the American imagination, are anything but a natural constituent of the nation in this moment. In its discursive attempt to synthesize the identity of the individual or community with the natural, Addams’s writing begins to imagine the citizen-resource as a natural entity, the organic citizen. This concept extends citizenship to immigrants, figuring them as part of a natural whole by virtue of their ability to provide "capital" to that greater ecologized body. A critical look at the constructed version of natural collectivity shows us how these individuals and communities are imagined as having eco-value. My sense of this term emerges out of Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas’s argument that "certain characteristics of the genes of groups of their citizens may potentially provide a valuable resource…what [they] call biovalue" (3). Construed as ecological contributors to the environmental nation, immigrants are implicitly and explicitly viewed as resources with potential eco-value by which the larger system can benefit.

Addams’s narrative attempts to transform the unnaturalness of the urban geography, particularly within the social settlement, and its inhabitants into something naturally American. “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements,” an earlier
lecture/essay inserted in her book as Chapter Six, does a significant amount of work for the rest of the text in this regard. The chapter is a reprinting, as she explains, of the lecture she delivered in 1892 at the Ethical Culture Societies’ meeting on “Philanthropy and Social Progress.” One of the most directly didactic/philosophical chapters in the book and one of the only sections in the text that does not incorporate anecdotes about specific individuals, “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements” lays out quite precisely Addams’s understanding of the activism needed to sustain a settlement house, and it presents her vision of the settlement and its inhabitants.

The literary construction of Addams’s argument models her vision of the actual national incorporation of the immigrant. She consolidates multiple identities – activists, regular citizens, and impoverished immigrants – into one public entity, and envisions the geographical space of the settlement and the city as a single unit as well. Addams’s rhetoric makes subjects indistinguishable at times, allowing her to collapse identity distinctions and the boundaries between physical geographies, ultimately enabling her listener/reader to imagine them as a cooperative entity. Addams creates a new physical being out of these identities: “To shut one’s self away from that half of the race life is to shut one’s self away from the most vital part of it; it is to live out but half the humanity to which we have been born heir and to use but half our faculties” (69). Addams’s language

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18 Addams was one of a number of speakers to focus on the settlement movement. The essay also was published that same year in the November *Forum* under the title “A New Impulse to an Old Gospel.”
of physicality here imagines the public as a body, potentially “vital” as a united whole or physically limited by only “half” the use of its shared “faculties.”

That this imagined body is particularly ecological, not just biological, becomes clear when Addams moves into describing the Settlement itself (and later the city more broadly) as “a living thing” with a particular “nature” (75). The geographical space of the settlement, according to Addams, requires of its residents that they be “content to live quietly side by side with their neighbors, until they grow into a sense of relationship and mutual interests…They are bound to see the needs of their neighbors as a whole…” (76, emphasis added). The Settlement residents, whom Addams already has united metaphorically and physically with non-settlement Americans, “grow into” an understanding of geographical wholeness. This concept bridges the broader city with the regionally-specific settlement (as well as the inhabitants of both), envisioning them as a united place and thing: “The Settlement, then, is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city. It insists that these problems are not confined to any one portion of a city” (75). Stripping away the boundaries between urban regions and their residents and implicitly between the city and non-city regions and inhabitants, Addams challenges her listeners/readers to imagine these subjects and places as collective members of a shared people and land. She emphasizes that this connectedness comes out of a life-like adaptability: “The one thing to be dreaded in the Settlement is that it lose its flexibility, its power of quick adaptation, its readiness to change its methods as its
environment may demand” (75). Addams imagines the settlement and its connected parts as an “environment” that can change and quickly transform itself into new shapes, much like an actual ecological entity.

Addams pushes this image of a living and adaptable settlement one final step with a vision of the city as organically united: “In short, residents are pledged to devote themselves to the duties of good citizenship and to the arousing of the social energies which too largely lie dormant in every neighborhood given over to industrialism. They are bound to regard the entire life of their city as organic, to make an effort to unify it, and to protest against its differentiation” (76 emphases added). The city is not only a living being, but also an “organic” entity, and proper citizenship demands that one acknowledges the organic nature of the urban area and its “life.” Ultimately, Addams brings individuals and diverse communities together under the rubric of “good citizenship,” uniting them geographically, metaphorically and physically as interdependent members of a collective that is imagined as a living, organic being. The place and the people merge in a way that Addams construes and presents as positive—it is the essence of an American citizenry to see itself as organically connected to each other and to their “environment.” This vision of synthesis configures membership in a nation and citizenship as natural characteristics and practice, and it foreshadows the ecological theory of heterogeneous organicism that Warming and Cowles present a couple of years later.
Addams relies heavily on natural or scientific language in this particular essay to establish this message, employing words such as “cultivate” and “cultivation,” “organism” and “social organism,” “the human system,” “organ,” “living thing,” “nature,” “adaptation,” “grow,” and finally “organic.” While “natural” and “adaptation” recur throughout the text as a whole, much of this language is retained within this short chapter. Connected specifically with immigrants and their locale, these words serve to formulate an image of the immigrant as a “grow[ing]” “organism” connected “organic[ally]” with a natural land. A garden and plant-like metaphor emerges out of this language, figuring these individuals as human plants growing out of settlement soil.

When Addams later expresses that “pliable human nature is constantly pressed upon by its physical environment” (110), the reader draws upon her previous image of a natural dynamic between the human and its environment to envision these subjects and their living quarters as environmentally connected to each other, like an ecological system.

The usefulness of this ecologized subjectivity and the naturalized community it creates in terms of both the insular textual argument and its application to an external nationalist construction of the U.S. becomes clearer later in her book:

She [one of the “ablest members” of the Chicago Women’s Club] said that when she was a little girl playing in her mother’s garden, she one day discovered a small toad who seemed to her very forlorn and lonely, although as she did not in the least know how to comfort him, she reluctantly left him to his fate; later in the day, quite at the other end of the garden, she found a large toad, also apparently without family and friends. With a heart full of tender sympathy, she took a stick and by exercising infinite patience and some skill, she finally pushed the little toad through the entire length of the garden into the company of the big toad, when, to her inexpressible horror and surprise, the big toad opened his mouth and
swallowed the little one. *The moral of the tale was clear applied to people who lived ‘where they did not naturally belong,’ although I protested that was exactly what we wanted—to be swallowed and digested, to disappear into the bulk of the people.* (179 emphasis added)

Addams’s anecdote of the devoured toad figures the nation as a garden, its citizens as a large toad, and the immigrant population as a small toad. The lesson lies in her interpretation of the big toad’s eating of the small toad—it symbolizes “exactly” for her what should happen between immigrants and the broader U.S. citizenry. “[T]o be swallowed and digested” into the national body is the goal; “to disappear into the bulk of the people” allows the tiny immigrant toads to become indistinguishable members of a powerful “people.” Both of the toads’ lack of “family and friends” seems a clever way to indicate a mutual need for each other. In order for the digestion of immigrants to produce a broader collective, this citizen self-procreation demands a geographical relocation of the immigrant presence (the “little toad” must move “through the entire length of the garden” to be in the company of the “big toad”) as well as the physical absorption of the smaller being into the larger. Portraying her subjects as natural, growing entities in a garden provides Addams with an image of national growth by figuring immigrants and their urban settlements as naturally absorbable into a broader national garden. Addams turns the notion of “people who lived ‘where they did not naturally belong’” on its head by re-imagining their presence (and their potential movement beyond the urban environment and settlement) as a natural one and something beneficial to sustain the
citizenry. She transforms her human subjects through her language and imagery into *national resources* by presenting them as *natural resources*.

This type of sociocultural theory would find full scientific expression in the study of plant ecology as we have seen. The similarities across Warming’s idea of plant communities that grow into a heterogeneous organicism for the benefit of the entire ecological system, Cowles’s distinctions between ecological parts and the whole they comprise, and Clements’s concept of the superorganism and progressivist theories circulating in the discussions of immigrant presence and urban space are most clear in Addams’s metaphors of human plant identity and their national environment. Bringing them together here not only shows that they are in dialogue, but it highlights that what we normally understand as ecology and environmentalism are significantly more expansive and deeply rooted in social, cultural, and political understandings of a wide range of human/environment experiences. The literary-political expression of naturalization, seen in ecological metaphors throughout multiple texts in multiple disciplines, imagine the citizenry as an ecologically-interdependent body that allows for natural adaptation. This is a narrative of ecological nationalism. Combined, their overlapping causes tell a conflicted story of acceptance, assimilation and national absorption enabling these texts to imagine the formation of local and national collectives as if it is a natural or organic process. This dynamic shows how environmentalist thought provides diverse venues through which nationhood and citizenship can be redefined, although problematically in moments, as I see it here.
The synthesis of languages and conversations that I have laid out (of which I see Addams as a forerunner) formulates the national body into an ecological one, whose naturalness stems from a rhetorical concept of organic unity. In order for the nation to be organicized (and hence viewed as naturally fit for progress), the figures and urban places who socially, legally and/or culturally have not been understood as natural members of “the people” that comprise the national body must be literally naturalized in order to be incorporated safely into this vision. Although it may not have been the authors’ explicit intentions, the narrative of organicism that emerges out of their rhetorical commonalities and borrowings, which they all couch in the hope for participatory democracy, suggests a particular process of assimilation. This assimilation Americanizes these ethnic and urban others by discursively transforming them into a resource, who, like actual natural resources, can be “control[led]” and put to use for the “benefit of many.” By transforming the ethnic other and the urban environment into a natural resource and a natural resource into a national resource, the threat of difference (and the “decay” it could bring to the nation) is subsumed “naturally” in a vision of democratic practice based on managed consumption.

Looking back now at Mary Antin’s story, “First Aid to the Alien,” and at her autobiographical descriptions of nature study and its effect on her Americanization experience, we can see just how complex literary depictions of a natural citizen can be. The ecological world is undeniably present in Antin’s fictional and autobiographical narratives of urban immigrant life, and green nature plays an explicit role in shaping
immigrants into Americans. The publication of both her short story and *The Promised Land* in 1912 followed the writings that I have linked throughout this chapter and came just before the final federal decision to put the conservationist ethic into official, congressional practice in 1913. Antin’s writing shows how an environmentalist sentiment was being generated beyond the lines of formal environmental thought and policy – its presence in her fiction and autobiography highlights how the eco underlies narratives of assimilation, national belonging and democratic participation. While her stories, on one level, seem to counter the validity of this particular discourse of naturalization, on another level, they embrace it as a means to carve out her own place in the American nation. Although in one narrative we see an immigrant child lead askew by a naturalist’s lessons in “rubbish” as central to what America means, in the other we see Antin’s final self-description as not only a child of America but also as a plant-like “human creature, emerging from the dim places… creeping slowly into the light of civilized existence, pushing more steadily forward to the broad plateau of modern life” (285). The intricate collapse of the processes of naturalization into the language and concepts of both plant ecology and environmentalist politics in this particular moment lays the foundation for a slippery use of eco-discourse to help define the dimensions of acculturation, national belonging, and citizen practices. This conflict will sharpen throughout the century as both environmentalism and race politics change, as the following chapters will examine. At the turn of the twentieth century, though, the nuanced merging of the sociological with the ecological and environmental produces a
particular version of national belonging. The organic citizen is born out of these intricately intertwined narratives of adaptation and collectivity.
Chapter 2
Indigenous Eco-Citizens: American Indian Reform and the Rhetoric of Environmental Belonging

I. Introduction

“The reservation is the cellar and the Indian boys and girls are the plants who are DYING for want of light. Carlisle says, carry the plant OUT into the light and ATMOSPHERE which breed English, industry and incentive. Carry it OUT where it will grow and gain strength and amount to something; where it will soon be able to hold its own head up and care for itself” (qtd. by Enoch 121). This sentiment was declared in the August 30th 1895 edition of Indian Helper, a weekly magazine of the Carlisle Industrial Indian School that advertised itself as being “PRINTED by Indian boys, but EDITED by The Man-on-the-band-stand who is NOT an Indian.”

Founded in 1879 by Richard Henry Pratt and in existence until 1918, Carlisle (modeled after Hampton Institute for African Americans in Virginia) was the first boarding school created specifically for American Indian children who were relocated from their familial life on reservations to Carlisle, Pennsylvania for at least two years (to attend school and to live and work with local white families over the summer) in order to be assimilated into American culture via access to “English, industry and incentive.”

While the reality of this experience was complicated, violent, and often deeply painful for the children and their families, Indian Helper unfalteringly asserts that the

1 See http://home.epix.net/~landis/991222ih.html for a sample of an edition of Indian Helper.
program is mortally necessary. By portraying the reservation as an infertile zone of
decay and death and Carlisle (and implicitly the broader nation outside of the reservation)
as a site of fertility, the Indian Helper imagines its pedagogical project as not only one of
transformation, but also as one of transplantation. American Indian peoples become
plants whose stunted growth on the reservation can be developed in the garden outside of
reservation limits, requiring that they be literally uprooted and replanted in hearty, life-
salvaging new soil. The language of ecology rhetorically frames the assimilation of
American Indians as an environmentally contextualized process of ecological
(re)development or rejuvenation.

This concept of cultural assimilation as an ecological adaptation sits within the
larger narrative that I began to track in Chapter One. In this chapter, I specifically look at
the converging discourses of environmental reform and Indian reform at the turn-of-the-
twentieth-century. I explore how ecological language, environmentalist thought, and
environmental legislation narrate – in fiction and in non-fiction – perceptions of the
American Indian’s capacity for U.S. citizenship. While my first chapter tracked these
convergences in relation to immigrant presence in the nation, this chapter examines the
ways in which the formalization of environmentalist thought coincided with a landmark
transitional moment in the federal legislation of the American Indian. The convergence
of sociopolitical concepts of indigeneity with the formalization of environmental thought
in this moment rhetorically shape and jurisprudentially define Indian status in the nation.
This turn-of-the-century moment is particularly important because citizenship is offered
to all natives in direct connection with property and land use. As Indian reform and an environmentalist sensibility merge, the dimensions of this new citizenship become more complex. The narratives that I examine in this chapter provide a conflicted sense of the way citizenship works for indigenous peoples in the U.S. While it is a means to provide people with the political rights that come with membership in a democracy, citizenship for the native in this moment also is a means to govern a people who, although living within U.S. lands, have lived threateningly outside of its jurisdiction. Eco-language emerges consistently in writings about this new citizenship. Used in legal discourse, political speeches, ethnographic writings, and fiction that focus on the American Indian, the environmentalist sensibility plays a conflicted role in both helping to strengthen assimilationist sentiment and in putting pressure on the way naturalization works and national membership is formed. The indigenous eco-citizen who is created by this merging of race reform and environmentalist thought becomes an essential element within the broader picture of national organicism.

The environmentalist sensibility that equated the practice of citizenship and national belonging with land use and resource management reconciled the presence of immigrant urban dwellers within the nation by ecologizing their process of assimilation and by naturalizing the city and nation as sites of cultivation. The immigrants’ lack of property in an industrialized, overcrowded urban zone significantly influenced the way in which this eco-identity came about, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Native Americans, of course, were in tremendously different standing in terms of property in
two main ways: they had dwelled on these lands prior to the formation of the United States, and they sustained a conflicting system of land use. As William Cronon explains of Indians in the New England region centuries earlier than this turn of the twentieth century moment, “What the Indians owned – or, more precisely, what their villages gave them claim to – was not the land but the things that were on the land during the various seasons of the year. It was a conception of property shared by many of the hunter-gatherer and agricultural peoples of the world, but radically different from that of the invading Europeans” (65). When the longstanding physical, ideological, and jurisprudential battles over land claim were met with the publicized closing of the U.S. frontier at the end of the nineteenth century, the narrative of eco-citizenship would come to function in a different way with American Indian inhabitants than it could have with immigrants whose history and relationship with domestic lands were significantly younger. Indian race reform – the project of civilizing the Indian – seizes upon a long-standing rhetorical link between the native and nature. But it is newly infused with the sociopolitical usefulness of concepts emerging in ecological studies and environmentalism, concepts that were circulating well beyond those realms, as I have been arguing. Equating the Indian with nature was not new, but the way in which Indian

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2 Cronon explains that the conflicting land use systems actually was not an immediate source of conflict at the point of contact: “The tension between Indian and European property systems did not become instantly apparent the moment the first European visited New England. Indeed, for well over a century before English settlement began in Massachusetts, Europeans and Indians engaged in a largely unrecorded trade which suggested more possibilities for cooperation than for conflict between their respective economies” (82).
reform merged with environmental legalities and eco-politics was particular to this moment and had a profound impact on how both Indian reform and environmentalism would evolve in the next century.

II. Allotment: The Vast Pulverizing Engine

“The organization of the Indian tribes is, and has been, one of the most serious hindrances to the advancement of the Indian toward civilization. Every effort should be made to secure the disintegration of all tribal organizations.”

-Second Annual Address to the Public of the Lake Mohonk Conference, 1884,6-7, (qtd. by Calloway, 354)

By the 1880’s the idea of giving individual plots of land to Indians for farms became a critical component of reform. This concept garnered support from multiple arenas of social reform – missionaries, politicians, educators, and authors – who saw it as a means of Indian empowerment, while it also found support from business groups and pioneers who considered the “enormous tracts occupied by tribes” wasteful and potentially immensely profitable (qtd. Nichols 164). In particular, miners, timbermen, and farmers wanted to gain access to the natural resources abundant on reservation lands, and representatives of western states sent letters on their constituents’ behalf asking that the reservations lands be opened to public use. These interests prompted Congress to pass the General Allotment Act in 1887, proposed by Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts, marking a pivotal moment not only in Indian reform but also environmental reform. The Dawes Act provided that the president would authorize 160 acres to each head of family, 80 acres to single adults, and fewer acres for minor children;
that allottees could select their lands, and certain lands would be designated theirs by an
agent if they did not do so; that the government would hold title over the lands for 25
years so that the Indian owners could learn the value of real estate; that “surplus” lands
could be sold to whites; and, that all Indian allottees who accepted this deal and adopted
“civilized” ways would be granted citizenship. Although many Indians opposed the bill,
the Commissioner of Indian Affairs ordered agents to deny them the opportunity to travel
east to express their opposition. While the act attempted, at least rhetorically, to make
farmers out its allottees, many of the lands proved poorly acclimated to agriculture, many
suffered from drought, stunting most attempts to farm. In 1891, Congress authorized
allottees to lease part of their lands to nearby whites, allowing them to profit
economically without enacting the “American” practice of farming at all. A land base
that started out as 138 million acres when allotment began dwindled to a third of that size
throughout the next four decades.

“Be it enacted,” the Dawes Act begins, “…That in all cases where any tribe or
band of Indians has been, or shall hereafter be located upon any reservation created for
their use, either by treaty stipulation or by virtue of an act of Congress or executive order

3 The Burke Act of 1906 “declared that Indians whom the Secretary of the Interior deemed ‘competent’ to
manage their own affairs would be granted patents in fee simple, which meant they no longer had to wait
twenty-five years before they could sell their allotments” (Calloway, 356).
4 Frederic Remington’s painting, The Twilight of the Indian (1897) depicts the Indian farmer leading his
horses and plow on a path away from the tepee, explicitly suggesting that the conditions afforded by the
Dawes Act would lead the Indian away from communal native life and into American individualism, and
implicitly suggesting that the continuance of the Indian race is, like the tepee receding into the background
and his straddling of green grass and shadowy soil, on the cusp of extinction.
setting apart the same for their use, the President of the United States be, and hereby is, authorized, whenever in his opinion any reservation or any part thereof such Indians is advantageous for agricultural and grazing purposes, to cause said reservation, or any part thereof, to be surveyed, or resurveyed if necessary, and to allot the lands in said reservation in severality to any Indian located thereon…” Prior to laying out the exact dimensions of the allotment procedures, then, the law puts forth its version of the reservation it is to dismantle: it is a land base “created for their use” by federal forces, a constitutionalized/federal construct; while tribes are “located upon” them, this language does not legally acknowledge the reservation as a communal, sovereign zone. The president’s role in ordering these lands to be allotted in severality is a calculated environmental decision in that the lands to be surveyed are the ones he designates as “advantageous for agricultural and grazing purposes.” Reservations are defined, from this opening sentence of the act, as a legislated (and legislate-able) area, which, through environmentalist foresight, can become fertile lands of production. They become potential resources for the nation, agriculturally in terms of their perceived farming capacities, and figuratively in terms of opening up land for American citizens and citizens-in-the-making.

The people who dwell upon these sites of potential development are folded into the language of land transaction throughout the act. They are discussed solely in terms of property exchange until nearly the conclusion when the act declares:
Each and every member of the respective bands or tribes of Indians to whom allotments have been made shall have the benefit of and be subject to the laws, both civil and criminal, of the State or Territory in which they may reside; and no Territory shall pass or enforce any law denying any such Indian within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law. And every Indian born within the territorial limits of the United States to whom allotments shall have been made under the provisions of this act, or under any law or treaty, and every Indian born within the limits of the United States who has voluntarily taken up, within said limits, his residence separate and apart from any tribe of Indians therein, and has adopted the habits of civilized life, is hereby declared to be a citizen of the United States, and is entitled to all the right, privileges, and immunities of such citizens…

This passage constitutes Indian participation in the allotment procedure as a land-based enactment of citizenship. It legally frames the assumption of the role of citizen as a precise set of interactions with land (within and outside of which “limits” the Indian chooses to dwell) and with the cultural connections that arise out of those geo-connections (positioning oneself as a member of “the United States” being “separate and apart from any tribe of Indians therein”). This geographical-cultural (and implicitly racial) adaptation is a “civiliz[ing]” project in which the Indians can “adopt” Americanness while also being absorbed into the nation. The United States is not only a symbolic nation here, then, but also an ecological body, a collection of lands with the promise of agricultural fertility, in which citizens share both a symbolic position within the national citizenry and an eco-position within a system of environmental zones. The inhabitants of a reservation are being rhetorically developed in this rhetoric, just like their land, into American land products.

As a legally constituted connection linking land use, the “rights” of a “civilized” individual, and citizenship status, I read the Dawes Act as a narrative of ecological
belonging. The Act, as eco-narrative, highlights the complicated way naturalization works when read in relation to the convergences between ecological concepts of “natural” systems and the sociocultural, political and jurisprudential conditions of racial belonging. It grapples with racial difference as a condition located precisely in conflicting land use systems, and implies an unnaturalness that is marked by geographic limits and the cultural connections these land-boundaries produce. This narrative works to naturalize racial difference in its symbolic, legal and environmental absorption of the Indian into the national collective as an individual property-holding citizen. This process is especially pertinent in that it culturally imagines a transformation of the longstanding enemy into a submissive ally. Rectifying the “Indian problem” goes hand in hand with rectifying a land/property problem.

In 1889, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs appointed Alice C. Fletcher to put the Dawes Act into effect with the Nez Percé by surveying and designating their specific allotments. Fletcher had gained a reputation as one of the leading authorities on Indians after she was sent to Nebraska by the Bureau of Indian Affairs when the Omaha Allotment Act was passed in 1882. Fletcher was an active member of the Lake Mohonk Friends of the Indian, who urged government to abandon the reservation system. She reported her experiences in the Carlisle Indian School’s newspapers and spoke at Carlisle often. Photographer E. Jane Gay joined the party as an unofficial member on this particular venture and documented the trip in photos and letters to Henry Pratt which she
compiled later in 1895 in a book called *Choup-nit-ki (With the Nez Percés).* These photographs record a tribe’s response to the enforcement of the Dawes Act, producing a narrative of daily life, cultural and geographical change, complications, resistance, and cultural violence. Gay comments on her special role when she writes, “…[N]one of us save the Photographer was disposed to speculate or theorize” (5). Although Gay corresponded regularly with Pratt and he published many of her letters in *Red Man* at Carlisle (suggesting that she, like Pratt, was entirely committed to the allotment/assimilation systems), she suggests that her unofficial role as photographer also provided her a unique critical angle. Nicole Tonkovich, in her essay “‘Lost in the General Wreckage of the Far West’: The Photographs and Writings of Jane Gay,” argues that Gay’s photographs of domestic, everyday scenes both challenge gender and professional photographic norms while also documenting Indian resistance. “Her work,” Tonkovich writes, “shows that the aim of the Dawes General Allotment Act – to transform supposedly savage Indians from nomads into citizen-farmers – was an impossibility… The Nez Percés were neither savage nor uncivilized, nor did they unanimously welcome allotment” (34).

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5 Emma Gay, her niece, did pen and ink drawings for the two volumes and bound them herself in London in 1909. These original texts included 191 photographs, and are now stored in Schlesinger Library. See digital images of the original texts at http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/3463914?n=1&imagesize=1200&jp2Res=0.25

6 Gay is speaking of herself when she writes, “the Photographer.” She writes of herself in third person and also uses the male third person pronoun (“he”) throughout.
The photograph, “Nez Percé Children,” taken sometime between 1889 and 1892, portrays the complex intersections between allotment and naturalization processes and nature itself. In “Nez Percé Children” we see eleven young Nez Percé girls, nearly physically indistinguishable, situated at the very base of a mountain. The girls wear matching Victorian dresses and hats, dressed up in honor of “Decoration Day” (Memorial Day); two of the girls hold bouquets of flowers (most likely to be put on veterans graves), one of whom is centered as the most prominent figure in the photo; two of the girls hold American flags, one of whom is holding hers up as if waving it, while the other allows it to lay passively in her lap. The photograph narrates the hybrid roles these figures are playing as national subjects, and it captures some of the complexities that I am explaining in the assimilative process of allotment procedures. The girls seem to be lodged in the mountain terrain, as if strangely sprouting from it. But they also seem to be on the mountain’s edge, as if falling out of it. They are simultaneously a part of the earth – organic subjects – and oddly dissonant with the terrain, as if the land is expelling them in their Victorian garb. This photograph captures the paradoxes of Indian subjectivity in this moment of allotment as something that is geo-political; Indians are imagined as simultaneously sustaining an organicness (in their being lodged in the mountainous terrain and holding their bouquets of flowers) and a nationalism (as marked by the American flags). This visual representation of the complicated convergence of organicness and nationalism portrays the in-between identity that indigenous peoples were imagined to and jurisprudentially bound to maintain as potential citizens in an eco-
national collective. Natives are legislated into maintaining both of these things – indigenous naturalness and Victorian decorum – but are neither fully here nor there. The subjects’ marginal location on the land in the image indicates the layers of marginalization to which these girls have been subject. They are teetering on the edge of the mountain, as if on the cusp of “civilized” or “savage” life.

Gay’s photo documents how Indians are being seen in the U.S., while also implicitly showing viewers the peril of Dawes legislation and the organic-nationalist identity construct that is borne from it. Tonkovich argues that “Gay’s camera seems to offer the ideal complement to [Fletcher’s] acts of genealogical alignment[,]… ambiguous, disorderly, and impenetrable records that suggest the difficulties and inconsistencies of a program that, on the one hand, promised to make of the Nez Percés members of Uncle Sam’s family and, on the other, had no intention of accepting Indians as racial equals” (59). While the photograph looks like an image of patriotism, it also is reminiscent of a particular form of photography in this moment. “Nez Percé Children” synthesizes the “before” and “after” images made so popular by institutions like Carlisle that would stage photographs when Indian students arrived and then again later to show their assimilative transformation as a means to document their pedagogical success in civilizing a savage race. In one combined photo, Gay’s subjects sustain their Indianness/Amerianness, hold flowers/hold flags, and have indistinguishably “raced” faces/wear Victorian dress. This doubleness highlights the problem that emerges particularly out of the Dawes Act and its legal, cultural, and geographic consequences, and as Tonkovich notes, the image
“exposes the layered ironies entailed in making the Nez Percé or any Indian group, for that matter – into wards of the nation” (58). Such a subject position makes these “wards” irreconcilably able to be assimilated and unable to be assimilated.

The photograph shows that although a primary goal of the allotment system was to “civilize” and assimilate the natives into indistinguishable members within the body of the U.S., they simultaneously are not entirely absorbed. Gay comments on the difficulties of this civilizing project when she writes in a letter, “Some, who did not live in Washington, seemed to believe that the wards of the Nation under its paternal care had been led quite out of barbarism up to the very gate of citizenship, that we had but to open the gate and they tumble over each other in their haste to come in” (17). Her sarcasm highlights that the entry of the native into the citizenry of the U.S. was not a process of simply opening the entryway to allow in the “wards of the Nation.” How and with whom native peoples identify was, of course, much more complicated than just offering a deal for citizenship in the US. And as the photograph depicts, the complex nature of this move into citizenship was one connected inextricably with land, both physically (allotment policy) and imaginatively (the concept of the natural native).

Gay explicitly discusses the problem of moving from commonly held reservation land to private allotments:

One can have unlimited patience with the unreasoning old men who… refuse to take their quota of land on principle, holding to their tribal right to roam at will all over the Reservation. It is of no use to explain to them that the world is so rapidly filling with people that no tribe can longer hold unused land against the clamor of a multitude of homeless men and women: that the earth, in a sense, belongs to all
that are upon it and that no man can be allowed to claim more than he can use for his own benefit or for that of others; that no treaty could be enforced that sought to hold back the living tide that had set in upon this continent: that any tribe of Indians that stood out against that flood would be overwhelmed. (121 emphasis mine).

Gay’s commentary acknowledges how opening the doors to US citizenship by way of individual property ownership did not simply enable a smooth transition from commonly-held reservation lands and tribal status into individual property and U.S. citizen status. There was resistance – a “refus[al]” to submit to the policy and a continued investment in “tribal right(s).” Gay phrases her perspective on this resistance with a familiar tone and argument of inevitability. The idea of an inevitable change in native life was a common one in this period, and Gay’s comments that tribal life and principles founded in native tribalism will be “overwhelmed” and “can no longer hold” against a “living tide” or “flood” of change would have registered clearly in readers (especially to Henry Pratt whose mission was inextricably tied to the idea of a dying race, or at least the dying out of what he perceived as savage ways).

What makes Gay’s sentiment of an inevitable changeover from communal to individual property so fascinating here is that she talks about it not only through the language of Indian reform (which we would expect), but also through the particular language used to discuss environmental conservation. The passage equates moving out of a practice of tribalism into individualism (and U.S. citizenship, too) with a shift in perspective on land use and with putting conservationism into practice. Indian reform, here, sounds similar to elements of Gifford Pinchot’s “wise use” concepts of
conservationism. There are echoes of Pinchot’s idea that “wilderness is waste” in that reservation lands are understood as wasteful “unused land” that could be put to proper use if settled individually. Gay’s comment that “the earth…belongs to all that are upon it” reads at first like a sentiment in support of communal land ownership (rather than the private property of allotments), but it is precisely this right that the passage implies is the bedrock of individual “claim” instead. Like Pinchot’s adamant point that U.S. land be put to the best use for the most amount of people for the longest amount of time, Gay’s reasoning in this passage falls upon a very similar general idea that land claim and use be defined by how it “benefit[s]” oneself and others. “Unused” reservation land is perceived to be of no or lost “benefit” to the vast amount of people who, it goes without saying explicitly, could settle and build homesteads upon it instead.

Making land available for “the people” functions differently in Indian policy from the way it does in conservationism, but the language and theories behind those actual functions collapse into each other here. Pinchot is adamant that “conservation of our natural resources [is] not for the trusts, but for the people” (26), and that a land should be “subdued and controlled for the service of the people, its rightful masters, owned by the many and not by the few” (27). Pinchot is working against a corporate ownership of U.S. lands – he argues for a land-base that is controlled by a democratic people rather than industry. His argument for “the benefit of many, and not merely the profit of a few” – which becomes the central tenet of conservationism – demands that there be a shift in the way land is used at the turn of the century (46).
Gay’s writing on the inevitability of privatized land ownership demonstrates how matters of Indian reform are brought directly into contact with ideas that seem similar to those of conservationism on the surface. The actual application of this shared concept of “benefit[ing] [the] many,” though, is vastly different in terms of its practical application in dismantling commonly-held reservation land into private allotments. “The people” in conservationist terms are a democratic body rather than big business, and the mission to provide them with ownership is a theoretical and practical resistance to a corporatism that uses land as a source of profit for “the few” rather than as a resource available to “the many.” But when this general concept is applied to Indian reform, native peoples implicitly are positioned in the role of “the few” who potentially stand to block “the many” from open access to land for private consumption. Indians are clearly imagined as separate from “the people” in this scenario. This tremendous shift in who and what characterize “the people” and their right to natural resources is flattened (if not masked almost entirely) when the same type of language used for land use policy is brought into the service of race reform here.

Henry Dawes makes this connection between conservationism and Indian policy explicit at the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian, held in 1896. In an attempt to provide legal justification for altering treaty rights between the U.S. and Indian tribes in his address titled “The Indian Territory,” Dawes argues: “These [Indian] nations hold their title – as I have read to you – in trust, for the use of the people. What have they done? They have misappropriated the trust.
They have taken that use from the whole people, and have put it in the hands of a few for their own private use, and what is plainer in a court of equity than that when a trustee violates a trust he may be removed?” (55 emphasis mine). Dawes makes a political and legal argument in support of allotment through the same language we hear Pinchot using in a different set of politics. This conflation of the two here makes explicit what Gay’s writing hints at – positioning Indians as “the few” by virtue of their land use ethic (i.e. communal ownership and use) relegates them to a position outside of “the people.” For Dawes, this position provides legal reasoning for the termination of tribes’ treaty rights to communally-held land sites. Again, the logic underlying conservationism and Indian reform is different, but the shared language here collapses these differences and allows matters of race reform and land use policy to shape each other. Not only are both Indian people and land being mutually legislated through the enactment of the Dawes Act, but the way these peoples and their lands are talked about merges in the progressivist language of environmental conservation. When land use policy and language also legislate and share the vocabulary for race policies, indigenous peoples – as persons – become lost in the transaction.

Dawes explains the central legal and geographical problem with tribal status for the United States:

I think that a stranger studying our country, would hardly be surprised at anything so much as to be told that there was in this country still another people, under the common Constitution of the United States and under the same flag that floats over its capitol, still another people, claiming under this very authority an independent power to govern and control itself,
without regard to the government or laws... He might wonder... how there could be another nation within this nation, yet independent of it... Can anyone give a student of our institutions any answer why it is then that, of all the territory in the States we have in the Union, there has been left this one, neither a State nor a Territory of the United States, with no State or Territorial government at all, inside of this Union, at the same time under this Constitution and this flag? (51)

That reservation land and indigenous peoples could exist within the nation of the United States without being governed by its Constitution – “within this nation, yet independent of it” – is not a new situation particular to this moment. Priscilla Wald discusses the roots of the nation-within-a-nation problem in the first half of the nineteenth century – the formation of the Cherokee nation in Georgia: “A Cherokee nation posed an important symbolic threat to the Union. Cherokee sovereignty would validate a permanent Cherokee presence of lands considered by Georgia to belong to the state. Such a presence would challenge the integrity of the state and the Union. A Cherokee nation would thereby recapitulate the prerevolutionary colonies’ relation to England: ‘‘imperius in imperio’ (a state within a state),’ conceptually complicating ideas of American exceptionalism, absorptiveness, and republicanism” (28). The politics of Indian reform and the actual environmental landscape of the United States had changed by the Fourteenth Annual Lake Mohonk Conference decades after the moment Wald is analyzing, but the essence of the problem holds firm. Indian tribes living on communally shared reservation lands at the turn of the century continue to represent nations within the nation, both peoples and lands ungoverned by the United States. Not only is this status a threat to national “integrity,” but it also presents a particular problem at the turn of the
century as the apparent closing of the frontier makes it symbolically and geographically necessary that additional lands be made available for domestic expansion.

Dawes presents this situation of “another nation within this nation” and “still another people” that exists among “the people” as politically and legally perplexing, and he understands severalty to be the answer. For Dawes, allotment is a political necessity as a means to bring both these separate peoples and their lands under constitutional governance. While land ownership and systems of governance are entirely intertwined here, Dawes makes a careful distinction between ownership and control: “I do not suppose the conveying of the land conveyed the right of government. It is a distinct, separate right. The soil I may own, but I have no right to govern myself because I own the soil” (55-56). His vision of allotment allows for a private ownership of “soil” that is mediated by national governance. The shift from tribal governance to U.S. governance by way of private land ownership rests on citizenship for Dawes. As I discussed above, U.S. citizenship was legally granted to Indian individuals who accepted their individual allotments. When Dawes discusses citizenship in this context, he speaks of it as if it is naturally occurring: “We [Friends of the Indian] knew full well that the moment they took their land in allotment and each one had his own possessions and came to know the value of his own home, all the rest would follow. He would be for having a government,

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7 Dawes says this immediately after his address in response to a fellow member’s comment: “If I understand it, the United States in conveying this land no more alienated its authority to legislate there, than when conveying a quarter-section to any individual” (56). Both this comment and Dawes’s response indicate a sense that standing treaty rights to land somehow do not restrict U.S. right to govern Indian lands and people.
law, and protection, and he would become a part of the United States and of the citizenship of the States like all the rest” (54). In addition to a form of membership, citizenship is a kind of mindset here, something that simply emerges as a result of private ownership. While property rights, land use practices, and citizenship are all legally defined (in general and particularly in the Dawes Act), Dawes primarily speaks of them here as values (or at least as something less tangible than a concrete legality). The lack of legal reasoning when he discusses property, land use, and citizenship (which is when we might expect to hear legal reasoning) and its presence specifically when he uses the language of conservationism to argue that natives have “misappropriated” their land trust highlights the significance of eco-discourse. While Dawes’s use of this eco-language provides the legal leverage to argue specifically for breaking treaty agreements, it also becomes the bedrock for his broader concerns about native presence in the nation, about how to rectify the problem of “still another people” living among “the people” of the U.S. It is such a powerful discourse that Dawes uses it in defining his central legal argument to encompass the redefinition of property lines, a change in land use practices, and a reformulation of the U.S. citizenry.

Dawes’s investment in allotment policy and its proposed effects on the native individual, particularly in terms of bringing the Indian population into the citizenry of the U.S., continue to be demonstrated in his essay “Have We Failed With the Indian?”, published in the Atlantic in August of 1899. Dawes uses this article to explain to a more general readership how the Act “now stands justified” (280). The Indian, by virtue of the
General Allotment Act, he argues, has been encouraged to change from “a savage, a homeless and lawless poacher upon civilization, and a terror to the peaceful citizen” into a state of “orderly, self-supporting citizenship” (281, 283). The language in this essay articulates the type of sentiments about assimilation that Gay’s photograph “Nez Percé Children” and her writing show to be significantly more complex. Dawes argues that the act enabled the Indian to become a member of the national body, safely contained in a way that strips them of their previously dangerous elements. “This, then, is the present Indian policy of the nation, -- to fit the Indian for civilization and to absorb him into it. It is national work,” he asserts (281). The move from savagery to civilization is one of absorption, and it a process that relies on the nation to bolster it – these are all concepts and language that sit comfortably in the assimilationist rhetoric of the turn-of-the-century that I discussed in Chapter One.

Industrial education and particularly the agricultural practices it fosters, he argues, are key in making this transition happen – learning how to be “a successful farmer” is infinitely more important than “any amount of book-learning or culture” (283). This idea clarifies how the Severalty Act explicitly was intended to produce American Indian farmers. Dawes’s suggestion that honing farming skills is more important than developing one’s intellectual capacities indicates how he explicitly connects Indian personhood with land practice, both in legal terms (the Act itself) and in prose (the essay about the Act). The shift from being a member of an “alien peoples” into a member of
the U.S. largely rests on this industrial skill, although Dawes discusses an alternative route to citizenship for the native:

This allotment carries with it also all the rights, privileges, and immunities of an American citizen; opens to these Indians, as to all other citizens, the doors of all the courts; and extends to them the protection of all the laws, national and state, which affect any other citizen. Any Indian, if he prefers not to be a farmer, incumbered with one of these homesteads, may become a citizen of the United States, and reside and prosecute any calling in any part of the United States, as securely under this law as any one else, by taking up his residence separate and apart from his tribe, and adopting the habits of civilized life. Thus every door of opportunity is thrown wide open to every adult Indian, as well as to those of the next generation. (283)

Dawes’s emphatic description of the citizenship rights Indians are afforded by virtue of the Severalty Act sounds promising – metaphorical “doors” are opened, “privileges” extended, and “rights” afforded on both national and state levels. Like “all other citizens,” Dawes promises with conviction, Indians can become a part of the U.S. system of constituted democratic rights.

Should a farming life not be desired, Dawes presents the option of “taking up… residence separate and apart from his tribe.” He repeats the same language here that appears in the act itself, highlighting how this version of Indian citizenship rests firmly on an essential division of tribal life.8 Whether it is a choice between individual allotment or a new residence, Indians are legislated into a land use practice and

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8 In the Dawes Act, this part reads: “…every Indian born within the limits of the United States who has voluntarily taken up, within said limits, his residence separate and apart from any tribe of Indians therein, and has adopted the habits of civilized life, is hereby declared to be a citizen of the United States, and is entitled to all the right, privileges, and immunities of such citizens…”
community role that is “separate and apart from his tribe.” Ultimately, it is this separateness that is the essential key in opening the democratic “doors” of citizenship and in providing the “rights” afforded to “all other citizens” of the US. An individual Indian, “separate and apart” from a tribe, is no longer the threatening ungovernable/ungoverned presence that Dawes laments in his earlier address; the Indian “nation within a nation” is dismantled by this division, allowing for the encompassing U.S. nation to absorb and govern Indian citizens as it does non-Indian individuals.

Governance is central to the matter here. American citizenship becomes a tool for breaking down tribal affiliations – making individuals of communal practices. But more broadly, granting this citizenship is a means to define the Indian as a governable subject. As individual, private property-holding citizens, natives are no longer the politically perplexing “still another people” and now can be brought under constitutional control. As Dawes explains in his article, natives have transformed from “a terror to the peaceful citizen” into a practitioner of “orderly…citizenship,” moving from an ungoverned threat into a member of an ordered national body. Racial difference, like the ethnic difference of immigrants which I discussed in my previous chapter, is mediated by this absorption into the national body, diminishing the threat of a racial other. However, the lines of difference are not erased, and the mission of “civilizing” the “savage” continues to be of particular concern with the native population. That this issue remains a concern after allotment policy has been put into effect is reflected in the Fourteenth Annual Friends of the Indian’s Lake Mohonk Conference held in 1896. In a session focused on education,
one member, Dr. James M. King (a Protestant reverend), declares, “It has taken many years to discover that the same process by which you can convert an Italian or a Scandinavian, or any immigrant who has come from a monarchical form of government, into safe citizenship must be applied in preparing these natives for loyal citizenship. The only power that will transmute the dangerously heterogeneous elements of our population into a safely homogeneous citizenship, is the free common-school system of education” (73). King explains a vision of acculturation (“conversion”) that breaks down difference and its threats – one that transforms a “dangerous heterogeneity” into and a “safe homogeneity.” He makes an explicit connection between the way this “process” of Americanization works for immigrants and Indians, suggesting that they both must be incorporated into a “safe” and “loyal citizenship.”

While King emphasizes a link between homogeneity and a “loyal” citizenry, another member of the Friends of the Indian contributes a seemingly different sentiment. Secretary C.J. Ryder responds to King by stating, “[W]e must remember that the Indian is an important factor in the Indian problem. He will never become a white man, and it may be better that he never should. The racial peculiarities of the Scotch, the Irish, and the English are distinct and definite. Each retains its own peculiarities when he becomes a part of our body politic. This is not weakness, but strength, political and sociological. The same is true with the Indian” (74). For Ryder, racial difference is not fully extinguishable, and becoming entirely like “a white man” is not only impossible for racial and ethnic others, but not necessarily desirable either. Rather than focus on safety
in sameness among the citizenry, Ryder is interested in a collection of differences that he views as a sociopolitical strength.

These two versions of the processes of assimilation – one invested in making a homogenous citizenry and one that allows for heterogeneity – find commonality in two main ways: they both emphasize a connection between the acculturation of immigrants and Indians, and they both are concerned with how their particular version of Americanization benefits the broader national citizenry of the US. The “safety” and “strength” of the “body politic” is central to both, and the way in which “racial peculiarities” of, first, immigrants and, now, Indians can be incorporated properly is key in their sentiments. Richard Henry Pratt’s vision of assimilation through allotment, as he expresses during the conference, is clearly invested in the strength of the broader nation as well. He allows for a coexistence of natives with non-natives, while also imagining an Americanization that eliminates difference and produces a kind of homogeneity:

The contact of peoples is the best of all education. That is the essence principle in the progress of unifying the races. It helped the negro up in spite of slavery. It Americanizes every foreigner. We have all been Americanized and made into one nation by living together….Now, I have always believed when lands are allotted to Indians – as they are to become citizens of the United States – there should be alternate allotments one quarter section to an Indian and the next one to a white man. Distributing the land in this way there would be destruction of tribalism and the taking on of citizenship at once. The white man would improve, and the Indian, surrounded on all sides by industrious example, would become ashamed of himself and his worthlessness, and would first imitate and rival the white man. (80)

For Pratt, organizing privatized land ownership to provide “contact” between natives and non-natives would break up tribalism, Americanizing natives and guiding them into the
“taking on of citizenship.” His vision of alternating white and Indian allotted lands imagines the assimilation of the native as mutually beneficial to the U.S. – not only would the Indian change from “foreigner” into citizen and diminish his “worthlessness,” but “the white man would improve” as well. Pratt’s understanding of this “education[al]” process of Americanization is based entirely on the land map – it is not only how Indians live for him (i.e. communally versus individually), but where and beside whom. It isn’t too surprising that Pratt would express this idea of “contact” with whites as necessary since he was the main proponent of Indian boarding school education and founded Carlisle Indian School. However, what is striking and new here is that he is speaking explicitly of assimilative education through allotment (rather than a boarding school system), and his understanding of the link between the two relies on the way land is divvied up. This concept expands “contact” into a dual-dimensional experience – Indians are brought into contact with whites as they are in his boarding school scenario, but whites are also brought into contact with Indians and made better by it.

These visions of how the national body deals with difference within its borders and among its citizenry reflect similar concepts emerging simultaneously in plant ecology. Although King, Ryder and Pratt are grappling with sociological and political concerns about nation formation (who belongs and how), the new scientific concepts of plant communities taking shape at the same time have a very similar logic to them. As I discussed extensively in Chapter One, Warming’s ecological theory of plant community formation grapples with the question of species “diversity,” and he argues that a
community made of “a congregation of individuals belonging to ones species” is both “profitable” and potentially harmful in that “it brings with it greater danger of serious damage and devastation wrought by parasites” (91-92). Warming theorizes that while “the dominant individuals of a community may belong to a single species… other species can find room and can grow between its individuals,” and ultimately “if the soil is to be completely covered the vegetation must necessarily always be heterogeneous” (93).

Warming’s description of plant communities and the dynamics of species development within them strikes a balance between homogeneity and heterogeneity. His theory defines diversity in plant communities as ecologically inevitable and even potentially beneficial. Just as the ecological theory of non-dominant species creeping up in between the dominant species to form plant communities, the sociological descriptions of allotment and its effects strike a similar balance between incorporating difference (the “alien” or “foreigner”) while not only retaining a “dominant” citizen, but also potentially improving that citizen and the national community.

This connection between talk of assimilation and plant ecology also presents itself in Dawes’s article “Have We Failed With the Indian?”. “The function of the law in this work,” he argues, “is little more than the clearing of the way, the removal of disabilities… The one vitalizing force, without which all else will prove vain, is the Indian’s own willingness to adopt civilized life. Until this is quickened into activity, everything else will wilt and perish like a plant without its root” (emphasis mine 285). This plant metaphor likens the Indian without the will to enact and live by Dawes Act
laws to a dying, rootless plant. Again, like the sentiment expressed in *Indian Helper* in 1895, the nation becomes a healthy, fertile garden, a fruitful land that healthfully cultivates and sustains its citizens.

In all of these sociological and political descriptions of assimilation, eco-discourse—whether an explicit reflection of conservationist language or a similar theoretical framework as that of plant ecology—becomes a useful way to give definition to a governable citizenry. When eco-language is put to use in the sociopolitical context of defining assimilation and its national effects, it helps smooth out the transition from outsider to insider, “foreigner” to citizen, and it naturalizes the processes of cultural and constitutional absorption. While stripping millions of acres of land from native peoples, the rhetoric surrounding the Dawes Act and Indian boarding school reform drew upon elements of a contemporaneous environmentalist sentiment to naturalize their actions of colonial “absorption” of land and peoples; to naturalize the “alien races” living among them; and to naturalize the vision and policies surrounding national belonging and its citizen-subjects. Allotment had deep cultural impacts—it was, as Theodore Roosevelt said, a “vast pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass” in favor of privatized ownership. But its significant alteration of U.S. lands (both immediately and in its aftermath) also indicate that it had tremendous environmental impacts as well. Allotment policy is an environmental policy in two main ways: First, it redrew the geographical lines of the United States, transforming millions of acres into private farms (in many cases on agriculturally poor lands) and opening much of it to white settlers. Second, it
positioned itself in the discourse of environmental conservationism being crafted at the same time. The rhetoric used to bolster the assimilative work of allotment and boarding school reform draws upon the language of natural resources, and it indicates how an environmentalist sentiment was being applied to and sharpened around race matters. Over a hundred years before civil rights and environmental activists defined environmental racism as a concept and environmental justice as a concern, these texts begin to demonstrate a pivotal moment in which legislation of both resource management and race converge. The citizenship role trained into students at boarding schools like Carlisle and constituted through the Dawes Act, seen through this lens, is not only a cultural and socio-political membership, but also one that is legislated and narrated as an ecological condition.

III. Interdisciplinary Stories: The Meeting of Environmental and American Indian Advocacy

In 1874, General Armstrong Custer led an expedition into the Black Hills of South Dakota. “I expect,” wrote Custer, “to visit a region of country as yet unseen by human eyes except those of the Indian – a country described by the latter as abounding in game of all varieties, rich in scientific interest, and of surpassing beauty in natural scenery” (382). George Bird Grinnell joined the expedition crew as a naturalist, and this trip (which confirmed the presence of gold in the region and sparked the gold rush) initiated his interest in Native American peoples and cultures. In 1875, Grinnell also
joined William Ludlow’s expedition to Yellowstone Park. Grinnell’s investment in both advocacy for native rights and in environmental conservation make him an interesting figure because his social, political, and professional work cross the very borders that I see being merged discursively in this moment. Grinnell became a prominent figure in conservation efforts. He launched and edited *Forest and Stream* magazine (from 1876 until 1911), a weekly magazine for naturalists and sportsmen; in 1882, he began editorial efforts for conservation, specifically to manage timberlands; he was involved in the effort to preserve Yellowstone Park, to protect it from commercialized use and to expose the neglect of the federal government in preserving it; in 1885 he discovered the glacier in Montana that now bears his name; he organized the Audubon Society in 1886, and started the publication of its magazine in 1887; that same year, Grinnell, along with Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot started the Boone and Crockett Club, dedicated to the restoration of America's wildlands; 1889 brought the publication of the first of his many books on Plains culture, called *Pawnee Hero Stories*; he, along with Roosevelt, published the Boone and Crockett Club’s first book in 1895; in 1899, he was a member of the Edward Harriman Alaska Expedition, a two month survey of the Alaskan coast by elite scientists and artists, including preservationist John Muir, naturalist William Burroughs, and photographer Edward Curtis; that same year, Grinnell was one of the organizers of the New York Zoological Society whose goal was to “advance the study of zoology, protect wildlife, and educate the public”; in 1900 his book *Indians of Today* was published (and again in 1911); Grinnell’s conservationist ethic underlay the federally
legislated conservationist policies launched by Roosevelt once he became president; in 1901, Grinnell published a number of stories in the *Harper’s*, the most striking of which I will discuss below; in 1910, Glacier National Park was made, largely due to his efforts; he continued to publish several texts after this point, throughout the 1920’s as well. This litany of his career is significant because it not only indicates how he crossed professional/disciplinary borders in his political and advocacy work, but it also demonstrates the importance of literary production within this work. Literary narrative, whether it was critical editorial work or fictional stories became a significant political tool for him.

One month prior to the publication of Henry Dawes’s essay “Have We Failed with the Indian?” in the *Atlantic*, Grinnell’s essay “The Indian on the Reservation” was published. His version of allotment policy is significantly more critical than that of Dawes. The essay exposes some of the difficulties of the effects of the Severalty Act:

> Indians are now subject to encroachments, conducted, not by an Indian ring, but by the government, which, in its ignorance, does injury to this race as serious as ever was done by any group of individuals. These encroachments are begun by white people living near the Indians, who covet the land possessed by them, and usually secured to them by pledges of the government's faith, and who endeavor to gain possession of it by lawful means; that is, by inducing the government to break that faith and violate those pledges.

> Wherever its reservation may be, an Indian tribe is bitterly opposed by local popular feeling. Its people are hated because they are Indians, and envied because they hold lands that white men might own. In thought, if not in words, its white neighbors say of a tribe, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Local prejudice and local greed combine to force the Indians -- who have no representative in Congress -- from their homes, where perhaps they may have made some improvements, and to which often they are deeply attached. The people who wish them removed do not care where they are taken, if only it is
away, somewhere else. Their object is to secure the land which they hope to have thrown open to settlement. (261)

Grinnell’s sharp words of criticism paint a vastly different picture of the process of allotment than the one we hear from its advocates. Rather than individualized allotment being a step into civilization and citizenship, he presents it as the result of an injurious “encroachment” upon Indians by whites for their land. For Grinnell, allotment is not primarily about its touted civilizing effects, but about “securing the land” for whites.⁹ His presentation of allotment shines light on how the Dawes Act is a race policy inextricably linked with land use policy.

The presence of the environmental world in Grinnell’s essay, then, is less metaphorical than I have shown in the other pieces. Here, he uses a metaphor to briefly suggest that whites view a tribe as if it is a tree to be “cut…down,” but he also engages straight on and extensively with issues of environmental conditions and land use. One of the main problems Grinnell notes with attempting to civilize the native through agricultural instruction and practice is an ecological one:

The plans of the philanthropists who were anxious to benefit the race were based on the general proposition that all Indians should become farmers. As most civilized men earn their living by tilling the soil, they took it for granted that the Indian could do the same, and must become civilized in that way. They were profoundly ignorant of the surroundings of the Indian and of the land he dwelt in, and did not know that over a very large part of the West no crops can be grown unless the soil is well irrigated. They seem to have imagined the great plains a

⁹ He is explicit about a forced decision to sell surplus land: “So, by cajoling, promising, bribing, browbeating, bullying, and using illegal votes, the sale, which was bitterly opposed by one half the tribe, was at last carried through by a bare majority” (262).
fertile country -- perhaps like the prairies of Illinois -- where, if land were ploughed and seed sown, bounteous harvests would be sure to follow. They did not understand that many of the Indian reservations consist of the most arid and barren lands that the sun ever shone on, -- a waterless, desolate, soul-withering region, whose terrors are incomprehensible to those who have never traveled over it. They did not know that many of the reservations are situated in the land of thirst, where water is the one priceless thing, and its lack the greatest horror. (259)

Grinnell’s dramatic image of a “land of thirst” highlights the extent to which a plan for assimilation fully based on productive farmland is doomed to fail. The solution to this problem, for Grinnell is one of adaptation -- since native peoples acclimated their labor to their environment, he argues, the process of civilizing them should do the same: “Only within a few years has it been learned that in a country adapted for stock-raising Indians should raise stock, and in a farming country they should farm. Yet ever since these tribes have been known to us, the Pueblos and others, who have always practiced irrigation, and the Navajoes, who have long been herdsmen, have furnished examples of this adaptation to environment, and have shown us that different peoples should be treated according to the different conditions which surround them” (259). Grinnell’s concept of environmental adaptation grows out of a familiar vision of the natural native. Viewing Indians as in sync with their land isn’t unique to his theory, but he also proposes an important shift in the way their Americanization could potentially work in relation to land use. Since Indians adapt to their physical environment, the argument seems to go, then the U.S. system of assimilating them should be adaptive itself and base its expectations on differences in land conditions rather than using an across-the-board plan for all tribes. While Grinnell is aware of some of the complexities of tribal life and sympathetic to the
way the U.S. puts assimilative policies into place, his theory also relies on the familiar and problematic idea that the ecological conditions in which native peoples live will shape who they are as members of the U.S.

As Grinnell delves further into the conflicts of land use, his version of an eco-assimilation and citizenship explicitly connects the use of natural resources with a political process:

After a time the land near them becomes settled, and the white people crowd about the reservation. The reservation may be good for something: it may be imagined to contain mines of coal or precious metals, or it may be a good cattle range, or the land may have valuable water on it. When this is the case, the people living in the neighborhood begin to urge upon their delegate, or their Congressman, or their Senator, the importance of moving the Indians, and throwing open their reservation to settlement. (262)

Grinnell exposes how reservation lands could be desirable for natural resources (coal, cattle, and water). He makes an important distinction between whites and Indians in both this passage and the one above—while Indians “have no representative in Congress,” whites can turn to “their delegate, or their Congressman, or their Senator.” The access to a political leader—by virtue of membership in a democratic political system—becomes key in gaining access to natural resources on Indian lands. Grinnell’s perspective highlights how land use practices are linked to a political process, and although this connection is quite prevalent in Indian race reform as I have been arguing, his piece is unique in its language of justice and rights.

Grinnell is clear that Indians are not only subject to the problems of assimilation and civilizing projects, but that, more broadly, they are subject to the problematic
exclusion from political membership in the U.S. He sees the struggle over land as intertwined with this lack of membership: “Too often, in addition to the difficulties which are inevitable, his advancement is retarded or stopped by his being robbed of his lands by methods which he is powerless to resist. The courts protect citizens; but the Indian is not a citizen, and nothing protects him. Congress has the sole power to order how he shall live, and where” (260). Grinnell’s criticism of the way allotment plays out becomes a broader criticism of the boundaries of political membership. He reiterates through the essay that a lack of protection and powerlessness that results from being outside of the U.S. citizenry leads to a profound “injustice” (264) in which “liberty” has been “abridged” and “rights are little safeguarded” (266). These sharp words of (in)justice and rights get to the heart of his essay, for what Grinnell is getting at is bigger than a matter of “robbing” land; rather, he is raising questions about the ways the political rights and land use of native peoples are mutually legislated and manipulated. Grinnell begins to provide a critique of the U.S. legislated position of the Indian—albeit a problematic one in that he remains invested in the process of civilizing a “half tamed” “savage”—and it is a critique that will take fuller form in later decades.

In one of the most poignant moments of his argument, Grinnell extends his concern over “injustice” to the ability and right to protest it: “His inability to speak our tongue or to think our thoughts must always be remembered in considering the Indian. He is voiceless; he is unable to claim any rights for himself or to tell his side of any story, for he has no method of communicating with civilized people except through an interpreter.
He cannot speak for himself, and he has no one to speak for him, no one to advocate his cause” (266). Having a voice – being able to tell “his side of [a] story” – is a critical element in the political ability to “claim any rights.”

Grinnell’s collecting and publication of Indian tales puts into practice the tremendous value that he gives to story. In his 1889 introduction to *Pawnee Hero Stories*, Grinnell is careful to explain, “In the Pawnee stories here set down there is no romance or coloring. The Indians themselves are talking… They are stories of Indians by Indians” (xiii). He follows the common ethnographic mode of his moment, framing his text as a compilation of stories told by Indians on the cusp of extinction. The book, Grinnell argues in this introduction, provides a record for the future of these Indians through their own voices. Although Grinnell argued earlier that “He (the Indian) cannot speak for himself, and he has no one to speak for him, no one to advocate his cause,” here he presents his text as a collection of tales spoken directly by the Pawnee. Grinnell frames his own role as the collector of these stories, not necessarily “speak[ing] for” the Pawnee, but enabling their legacy to be recorded through him:

The task that I have set out for myself is that of a recorder. No attempt has been made to give a literary color to the hero stories and folk-tales here written out. I have scrupulously avoided putting into them anything of my own. The stories are told to the reader as they are told to me. They are not elaborated. I have tried to show how Indians think and speak, rather than to make their stories more entertaining by dressing them up to suit the civilized taste. My object is giving these narratives in their present shape is to make a book which shall be true to life and shall faithfully reflect the Pawnee character as the storytellers have themselves painted it. (11-12)

Without this introduction, though, the reader is not given any clues that the stories are
written (or told) by anyone except the author of the book, Grinnell himself. He does not include source information or quotation marks, leading a reader to imagine the tales to be self-fashioned rather than a recording of an orally-told story. This presentation is especially significant when Grinnell publishes stories in Harper’s Monthly. Without the framing preface that introduces the stories as Pawnee-told tales, the appearance of the stories in the magazine collapses the distinction between Grinnell as fiction author and Grinnell as ethnographer. As a result, the Harper’s stories circulate publicly as if Grinnell is “speak(ing) for” the Indian through a fiction-like form. The stories bring together his professional investments in native cultures and environmentalist practice, and this intersection via storytelling promotes a new way of understanding both native peoples and the natural world.

Grinnell’s short story, “The Medicine Grizzly Bear,” published in Harper’s Monthly in 1901, tells of a Pawnee “poor boy” who becomes the most significant member of his tribe by learning powers from a bear and other animals who teach him all that they know, potent skills that he later passes onto his son before his death. The boy meets the bear when, deciding to commit suicide, he goes to a well-known dangerous place littered with human remains, expecting to be devoured. But, at the climactic moment of potential death, what emerges instead is compassion, as the bear says, “He [one his cubs whom he designates as the boy’s brother] has told me your story, and how you are poor, unhappy, and how he has kept you from being eaten up. I have pity on you, and will send you back to your people, where you may do some good among them… I
might make you my son and give my power to you, so that you may become a great man among your people” (737-8). It is the story of the boy’s life that inspires the bear, the strongest being on the land (stronger, even, than the tribe’s medicine men), to empower the boy, who later becomes known as “the bear man,” to do good for his people. The Pawnee boy’s transformation into “the Bear man” is a certain process of naturalization, an adaptability made possible through access to other cultures (here, even beyond the human realm) that enables him to bring together multiple knowledges and ultimately perform good deeds for his people.

A story becomes the medium between the animal domain and the human domain, bringing forth empathy, communication, and familial connectedness across these divides, and initiating guidance and strength for the Indian tribe. The human-like bear trains the boy to incorporate a powerful animalness, marking the Indian as an embodiment of the natural world, the animal kingdom and humanity. “The Medicine Grizzly Bear” shows this hybrid condition as a position of beneficent power that arises out of storytelling exchange and language, both of which enable communication across what whites would have considered restricted boundaries – animal/human beings and their land territories.

The version of naturalization that Grinnell’s story presents, then, is a more literal process – that is, physical/physiological/natural – than symbolic assimilation into a national body; it is an organicism initiated by storytelling and the crossing of land, animal and human boundaries; and, it is a process and positioning that lends ultimate power to Indian peoples.
This story, like the ones published in *Pawnee Hero Tales*, is a Pawnee-told tale. However, its presentation in *Harper’s* clouds the lines of fiction and ethnographic salvage even further. Without an introduction, the story on its own does not give the reader a contextual frame. The lines between the native and the natural blur along with the boundaries between fiction writing and ethnographic recording. The result is a story that presents to an eastern, middle class, white readership a version of eco-indigeneity. While “The Medicine Grizzly Bear” might seem like an imitation of an Indian tale, I want to suggest that Grinnell is doing more than what Philip Deloria calls “playing Indian,” and that he is not simply primitivizing the Indian by associating him with animals. Rather, Grinnell’s story offers a version of story/storytelling, Indianness and communal practice that is deeply connected to his vision of environmental conservation. “The Medicine Grizzly Bear” imagines an identity and practice based on a different set of agents/agency, reliant upon certain interactions between humans and the natural world. It narrates the types of convergences Grinnell professionally practiced – his interest in Indian tribes, particularly the Pawnee, and environmental conditions – in order to put forth a concept of how humans can live upon a land. Once the bear man’s affiliations move beyond not only tribal but also human boundaries, he is able to create positive change; his experience in the natural world, its reception of him and his reception of all of its elements, allows for a powerful communion. While he criticizes the lack of political membership for the Indian and highlights injustices in his expository writings, Grinnell’s fictional world here seems to present an alternative body politic. “The
“Medicine Grizzly Bear” portrays and celebrates a bigger system than a national democratic one, and it centers around native peoples and their land ethic as central within it. Grinnell positions his characters in an ecological system, all interconnected. In giving voice and wisdom to creatures perceived as inferior, he suggests that humankind is an equal participant in a broader collective than recognized.

In his 1911 preface to the revised edition of *The Indians of Today*, Grinnell writes “Congress has been constantly curtailing the old liberties of the Indians and trying to legislate them into citizens” (7). Citizenship here is a mediated role for the Indian, a form of constitutionalized control. Grinnell’s story tries to present a version of citizenship that breaks open its restrictions. It gives a new way to understand nature, membership, and the potential dimensions of organic identities. The Indian’s eco-condition/position in this story is empowering and transformative, and it subversively instructs white readers in reevaluating environmentalist practice and the dimensions of communal membership.

While Grinnell’s story engages with the broader eco-narrative that I have discussed, it also dismantles elements of this narrative in order to undermine the anthropocentrism of white readership knowledge systems and to position Indian peoples as significant members of a collective much broader than the U.S. nation.

Fiction writer Hamlin Garland turned to studying and writing about the American Indian during this time period as well, and some of his work overlapped directly with Grinnell’s. In 1902, President Roosevelt called him to the White House to discuss the “Indian problem.” Roosevelt trusted that Garland knew the conditions on the western
reservations primarily because of his book *The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop* (published in 1902, although rooted in his earlier story “A Typical Indian Scare: The Cheyenne Trouble”). There, Garland introduced the idea of renaming the Indians to facilitate the practical enactment of Dawes allotted lands, an idea that the Oneida Chester Poe Cornelius had suggested to him in 1900 (Underhill 46). He created a staff of interdisciplinary leaders to undertake this project, including George Bird Grinnell, Clinton Hart Merriam, WJ McGee (when he was in the Bureau of Ethnology), and Charles A. Eastman (when he was a doctor on Crow Creek reservation in South Dakota). Garland’s team—men professionally involved in the formation of a formalized environmentalism and anthropology, and/or advocacy for Indian civil rights—indicates how land/Indian matters becomes a forum in which socio-political investments in conservation, race, and nationalism come together.

Garland’s entrance onto this political stage came out of his work as a fiction writer. Although he is perhaps best known for his 1891 collection of stories *Main Traveled Roads*, Garland also was a prolific writer between 1892 and 1916, and his work was published in periodicals like *Harper’s Weekly, McClure’s, Century*, and *Craftsman*. Traveling through the West and spending significant amounts of time on Indian reservations, Garland understood his literary production as an extension of fieldwork: “My stories might have been better stories, that I will admit, but they are never falsifications of life and character. They are based on studies in the field…” (Underhill 55). Garland’s work as a literary-ethnographer began to take on a specifically
environmentalist stance when a meeting with Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot triggered his interest in conservationism, particularly forest conservation. By 1907, forestry became his chief interest, culminating in *Cavanagh, Forest Ranger* in 1910, and his notebooks between 1912 and 1913 are filled primarily with forestry notes (Underhill 51). When he visited the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming in 1908, the Crow Reservation in 1909, and the Flathead Reservation in 1913, his primary interest was the forest lands on the reservations, made evident by his scant notes on the people and prolific notes on the forest (Underhill 52).

Garland’s stories were not only the tool he used to fictionally document his work, but also the means by which his literary-political investment in American Indian cultures came to the realization that the lives of his subjects were deeply connected to their environmental conditions. We can see Garland formulating this connection in “The Red Man’s Present Needs,” an essay he published in 1902 in the *North American Review*. He directly addresses issues related to the implementation of the Dawes Act in this essay, and he deliberately marks it as a piece in which he is stepping out of his fictional shoes and into an expository, journalistic mode: “…This unofficial inspection, made for fictional purposes, I now wish to turn to practical account in aid of a clearer understanding of the present conditions of the nation’s wards” (166 qtd. in Underhill). The land in his account is not a symbolic landscape, or a natural character in a story; rather, it is a collection of essential resources and the critical ways human groups have access to and use of these resources. “…[T]o understand the ‘Indian problem,’” Garland
writes, “is to understand the climate, soil and surroundings of each one of fifty reservations, in a dozen States, hundreds, even thousands of miles apart, and to take into account the peculiarities of as many differing tribes of men” (167 qtd. in Underhill). As he begins to go through the land of various tribes, detailing the environmental conditions in which they live, Garland does not romanticize or naturalize the relation between Indians and land. He shows, instead, how it is a much more concrete relation. He redefines the “Indian problem,” locating it not entirely in the question of what to do with Indian subjects within the nation, but more so in the problematic relationship between natural resources and tribes’ restriction from abundant resources.

Showing his reader the ecological elements of reservation lands and explaining what this means in terms of sustenance and agricultural practices, Garland begins to illuminate how complex the relation is between the ways Indian presence and tribal identity are understood and the reality of their legal/geo-position in the nation and on the land. This environmentalist angle on the “Indian problem” becomes the foundation for his encompassing argument that the “Dawes land theories” have forced the allottee into a liminal position as “neither man, brute, nor neighbor,” and that “Wherever a red man takes his allotment, he should be considered a citizen free to come and go as he pleases, subject to the same general laws as his white neighbor” (175 qtd. in Underhill).

Environmentalist language – a language that he comes to via his work as fiction writer/ethnographer – gives Garland the rhetorical leverage to argue for political freedom and democratic positioning within the national citizenry for Indian peoples. The Indian is not
a romanticized natural being, or a unique natural resource for national consumption; rather, natives have been legislated into a certain restrictive relationship with environmental conditions that has disallowed them to become a part of the citizenry. Citizenship practices and national membership are connected to environmental elements as in the earlier narratives I have discussed, but Garland begins to expose how this link is problematic when certain inhabitants are jurisprudentially located on poor land.10

Grinnell’s and Garland’s work move across multiple disciplinary borders: fiction writing, ethnography, sociology, ecology, environmentalism, etc. Grinnell begins his work outside of literary production in environmentalism and later turns to the story as a means to narrate Indian inhabitants’ existence, while Garland, at the same time, moves from the literary into the environmentalist. The literary form allows these figures to engage in and contribute to a public discourse about conservationism and racial difference. Their work draws upon and generates a certain environmentalist language connected specifically to Indian status, allowing them to complicate the perception of an “Indian problem” and argue for more humane treatment of Indians. This interdisciplinary process and the literary products that emerge out of it lay the foundation for fiction writing that deliberately and emphatically work to revise the way Americans understand associations between citizenship, Indian presence in the nation, and the significance of

10 This position illuminates why Garland would be involved in renaming Indians in that his logic would understand it as a means to facilitate the distribution of land sites and undergird the process of deeming natives U.S. citizens as a result.
U.S. land. Mary Austin takes up these matters with vigor in her novel, *The Land of Little Rain* (1903), a mixed-genre text that marks a distinguishably new narrative of organic citizenship.

Austin entitled her novel after the Mojave Desert, a place where life, she wants to show, is about land and community. At every turn, the novel dismantles potential expectations of language, form, style, and conceptual content. Austin establishes immediately in the Preface that she will use the language of “the Indians [who] have been there before [her]” whenever possible (viii). Her language and her mapping systems, we learn from the preface, will be different than her contemporaneous white reader might have expected – “so few names are written here as they appear in the geography” (vii). Although she gives a brief geographical description of her setting (a mapping that positions it as the Mojave Desert area), she prefers to name it “The Land of Little Rain” or the “Country of Lost Borders,” initially defining it more carefully by way of its inhabitants, their language for the land, and the details of its terrain: “Ute, Paiute, Mojave, and Shoshone inhabit its frontiers, and as far into the heart of it as a man dare go. Not the law, but the land sets the limit. Desert is the name is wears upon the maps, but the Indian’s is the better word. Desert is the loose term to indicate land that supports no man;…Void of life it never is, however dry the air and villainous the soil. This is the nature of that country….” (3). Austin quickly challenges the notion of humankind being in control of nature/land by suggesting that rather than property law, it is the authority of the land itself that reigns. This argument is especially provocative when contextualized
alongside the Dawes Act.

From its opening, her narration of the landscape is not simply a description of a natural site; rather, Austin is *doing or re-doing* geography, reconceptualizing how her readers see, read and experience land and life-forms on it. Since her stories are prefaced with a deliberate explanation of her choice to follow the “Indian fashion of name-giving,” and are followed by a lengthy description of the land, her reader is guided in making the connection between language systems and land knowledge. We can see why she does this work through stories, then – it allows her to create, very literally, a new kind of narrative about how we live and the communities in which we identify, and it encourages her reader to make the connection between reading a different kind of text and conceptualizing land and communal membership in a different way. The new story Austin tells develops around a guiding principle that there are multiple dimensions to land-life. She dismantles a human-centered approach by narrating careful details of plant, animal and human-life interactions, and occasionally, she even takes the reader out of his human position and into one of “the hill-folk” or “furry folks” (28). From here, the text works on recentering the reader’s perspective by showing land-life from multiple subject positions: “Getting down to the eye level of rat and squirrel kind, one perceives what might easily be wide and winding roads to us…” (25). Austin not only calls us to assume these animal perspectives – putting our noses to the ground to experience trails, grass and plants the way a different “kind” experiences them – but she also comments explicitly on the restraints of the human position on land: “It seems that man-height is the
least fortunate of all heights from which to study trails” (26). Bringing “man” down from his lofty position and elevating the significance of other beings expands the possibilities for communal connectedness, making room for what Michelle Campbell Toohey understands as “the speaking positions of other marginalized participants in the ecosystem” (204). The novel tells us that “Most species have well-defined areas of growth, the best index the voiceless land can give the traveler of his whereabouts” (10). Plant life is a form of language to Austin, requiring room for the expression of that voice as well as skilled readers to interpret this ecological language. I agree with Toohey’s understanding that this eco-linguisticity “engender[s] an ecological dialogue that heterarchically values human and nonhuman voices alike” (204). Austin’s novel becomes a lesson in both how to read this language and how to navigate this terrain.

While reading a text or hearing a story and experiencing a landscape might seem to be different processes, Austin is training the reader to see how they actually are conjoined practices. Seen in this light, we can understand The Land of Little Rain as an eco-narrative that synthesizes environmental condition with literary form. As an eco-narrative, the novel challenges how we conceptualize citizenship and communal membership.

As I have discussed, Austin immediately makes reference to Indian forms of language and knowledge at the start of her book. Indigenous peoples become the model land-citizens who enact the earth-literacy that Austin wants her readers to imagine: “Trust Indians not to miss any virtues of the plant world!” (10). Indians, like “wild
things,” are effective land readers who “will show you a use for everything that grows in these borders” (88). Austin’s comparison of Indians with animals here might be read as a declaration of indigenous peoples as primitives, embodying an animal-like naturalness, but I want to suggest that, like Grinnell’s analogy, there is something more complicated going on in this text than just a conflation of indigeneity with nature. Barney Nelson’s suggestion that Austin “believes cultures that remain in closest contact with natural rhythms and resources will prove sustainable” (238) helps us consider how Austin is positioning the Indians and their ecological knowledge as models of living “with the land” (Austin, ix). At best, this vision is intended to be neither demeaning nor romanticizing; rather, it can be seen as an attempt to offer a practical mode of human/nature interaction that puts sustainable communities into place.

While in earlier narratives the racial or ethnic other becomes a natural resource for national consumption, Austin’s novel textually models and metaphorically imagines a community produced by the equalizing of all the constituents in an ecologically interdependent collective – whether human, animal, plant, or elemental. In discussing Austin’s later book *The Flock* (1906), Nelson argues that Austin “give[s] democratic authority to the common working class” (223). I propose that Nelson’s sense of Austin’s literary engagement with questions of political positioning and democratic practice is applicable to how she understands and narrates subjectivity beyond human boundaries in *The Land of Little Rain*. The novel works up to a final chapter that explicitly engages with the issue of democratic membership. Austin’s description of “The Little Town of
the Grape Vines” is one of patriotic hybridity:

Perhaps you need to be told that this is the anniversary of the Republic, when liberty awoke and cried in the provinces of Old Mexico… and then music, the noblest of national hymns, as the great flag of Old Mexico floats up the flag-pole in the bare little plaza of shabby Las Uvas… there will be a reading of the Declaration of Independence and an address punctured by vives.” …At midnight the flag comes down…another flag begins a slow ascent, - it takes a breath or two to realize that they are both, flag and tune, the Star Spangled banner – a volley is fired, we are back, if you please, in California of America… They sing everything, America, the Marseillaise, for the sake of the French shepherds hereabout, the hymn of Cuba, and the Chilian national air to comfort two families of that land. (275-278)

For Austin, the ultimate image of “national” community is a kind of internationalism that converges upon one land and is practiced by local groups. That a novel packed with careful landscape details and accounts of stories told by certain individuals works up to this image of immigrants united in patriotic practice suggests to me that Austin is showing us how allegiances are significantly broader than recognized and that national communities are grounded in an ecological base.¹¹

Her “multivoiced narrative” suggests that storytelling is integral to formulating these communities of hybrid collectivity – new speakers give voice to different viewpoints and narratives, and they demand a new kind of listening. This storytelling exchange in the novel is part of a set of ecological practices that make human citizens better members of communities and better inhabitants of an ecosystem (Nelson 229).

¹¹ The U.S. Navy had made the Star Spangled Banner the official song to be played at the raising of the U.S. flag in 1889 (General Order #374), but it wasn’t until 1916 that Woodrow Wilson ordered it to be played at military occasions and other significant events and then not until 1931 that it was made the national anthem.
Toohey is getting at this when she argues: “Austin suggests that ‘ease’ for the human species must come from a mutual interplay of human need in the ecological community in the same way that other species survive. In reality, the people of Las Uvas will thrive because, as a community, they are able to lower one flag and raise another without losing their identity and traditions. Austin suggests that this ability to operate from relational adaptation is also the basis of human survival in the ecosystem” (216). Austin’s deliberate merging of human community-formation, ecological elements, and environmental conditions redefines what a “country” is and what it means to be a member of it. The text puts forth a version of organic citizenship that plays with the way the discourses surrounding nationalism, racial and ethnic difference, and conservationism circulate through each other, and it radically imagines an organicness that equalizes its citizens. This kind of citizenship – one that is enacted both inside of constitutional membership and outside of those limits – is modeled by natives who “live like their trees, with great spaces between” and by others who learn to inhabit the land in a similar way like “old miners…weathered into the semblance of the tawny hills” (88, 19).

I showed earlier how the Dawes Act’s legislation of Indian land ownership constituted a link between ecological thought and the sociocultural, political and jurisprudential conditions of racial belonging. The process of cultural naturalization for Indians is imagined and legally defined as a physical naturalization as well in this Act. *The Land of Little Rain* works against the legal logic of the Dawes Act by producing new concepts of naturalization and citizenship. “Not the law,” remember, “but the land sets
the limit” (3). The nation becomes a collection of eco-communities comprised of human and non-human citizens, and the processes of naturalization that create communities cross identity borders and allow for a hybrid collective based on ecological interdependence.

The book’s version of an eco-nation shows how national/communal subjects already are ecological beings in that they are intricately tied to communal systems of sustenance. The natural and the cultural are one and the same here, and their mutuality in the book makes the ecological condition of national existence potentially promising for democratic membership and practice. The role of Indian citizens as readers of the land in Austin’s version of national collectivity positions them as intricately embedded in the ecological exchanges that produce and sustain community. A few years later, the legal rhetoric of the American Antiquities Act of 1906 would use the concept of an indigenous natural/cultural link for nationalist purpose. The implications of the Antiquities Act would highlight how developing a concept of eco-citizenship around models of indigeneity can be problematic. (I will discuss this act in the next chapter and its long-lasting implications in Chapter Five.)

The texts that I have examined in this chapter – legal texts, political speeches and articles, and fiction – written about (not by) the Indian lay out the way indigeneity gets conceptualized through an environmentalist sentiment particular to this moment when Indian reform and environmental policy merge. The long-standing connection that the U.S. imagined between the native and nature takes on new dimensions at this turn of the century moment right when Indian citizenship is being legislated in direct connection
with their land use. The eco-language and environmentalist sentiment that underlie the legislation of the Indian’s role in the U.S. nation help to define a particular indigenous eco-citizen. This kind of organic citizenship (both culturally imagined and legally imposed) for native peoples remains steeped in old ideas of a primitive, natural nativeness on one hand, but it also promises the potential for a position of political equality in a newly imagined democratic collective. The complexities and power of the interdependence between Indian reform and an environmentalist sentiment are seized upon by native authors in this moment as a means to redefine racial politics. The next chapter focuses on these authors whose political and literary works craftily use the concepts of eco-indigeneity to critique the dimensions of U.S. belonging.
Chapter 3
“Could Their Every Wound Find Tongue”:
The Eco-Politics of Charles Eastman and Zitkala-Sa

What did it mean to be the first generation to hear the stories of the past, bear the horrors of the moment, and write to the future?
What were tribal identities at the turn of the century?

-Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*

Native American Indian identities are created in stories.

-Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*

I. Introduction:
National Monuments and Indigenous Relics of the Past

In 1907, photographer Edward Curtis began to publish *The North American Indian* “Being a Series of Volumes Picturing and Describing the Indians of the United States and Alaska.”¹ In the Forward to the twenty-volume collection, Theodore Roosevelt explains the relevance of Curtis’s work: “The Indian as he has hitherto been is on the point of passing away. His life has been lived under conditions thru which our own race past so many ages ago that not a vestige of their memory remains. It would be a veritable calamity if a vivid and truthful record of these conditions were not kept… Mr. Curtis in publishing this book is rendering a real and great service; a service not only to our own people, but to the world of scholarship everywhere” (Curtis xi). Roosevelt’s

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¹ As of Volume 9, published in 1913, the subtitle reads “Being a Series of Volumes Picturing and Describing the Indians of the United States, the Dominion of Canada and Alaska.”
praise for the collection comes from his sense that Curtis has captured a primitive people on the brink of extinction. Curtis’s own introduction to Volume One reiterates this point: “The information that is to be gathered, for the benefit of future generations, respecting the mode of life of one of the great races of mankind, must be collected at once or the opportunity will be lost for all time” (Curtis xv-xvii). Both Roosevelt and Curtis suggest that indigenous peoples are of a dying race, but they also share a sentiment that the photographic “record” of native existence is of use whether it be for the “people,” for the sake of “scholarship,” or for “future generations.”

Curtis’s work has been criticized in recent years for having been manipulated and staged, a problematic act, of course, because he presents the photographs as ethnographically accurate and “true.” Even so, the narrative his photographs (as well as the text he wrote alongside of the images) produce is a vibrant example of the way non-native America sees the native in this period. Curtis is clear in his introduction that he is capturing a particular kind of story, one that is visual, linguistic, and environmental: “The word-story of this primitive life, like the pictures, must be drawn direct from Nature. Nature tells the story, and in Nature’s simple words I can but place it before the reader… It is thus near to Nature that much of the life of the Indian still is; hence, its story, rather than being replete with statistics of commercial conquests, is a record of the Indian’s relations with and his dependence on the phenomena of the universe – the trees and shrubs, the sun and stars, the lightning and the rain…” (xiv - xv). The story that readers get conforms with the turn of the twentieth century perception of what Curtis called the
Vanishing Indian—indigenous peoples, tightly interwoven with nature at the conclusion of his racial and cultural existence.

The narrative of the natural native certainly is not new, but it becomes more complex and has significant political implications in this moment, as I show in my previous chapter. The conservationist sentiment being put into official legislation at this time shares strands of the same story that Curtis is telling. Like natural spaces, land, and natural resources, the memory of the native is professed to be of use to the nation, and so both are to be protected “for future generations.” Critics have discussed the myth of the Vanishing Indian, particularly Walter Benn Michaels who argues: “...[I]f Indians had not been perceived as vanishing, they could not have become the exemplary instance of what it meant to have a culture... it is because the Indian’s sun was perceived as setting that he could become... a kind of paradigm for increasingly powerful American notions of ethnic identity” (232). Michaels pinpoints the effects of a cultural imagination that grows out of a popular post-Wounded Knee (post-1890) sentiment that Indians were on the cusp of racial extinction. It is in their perceived “vanishing,” he shows, that they are able to be appropriated for nationalist purposes. What has been discussed less and of greater interest to me is how the legal, fictional and non-fictional texts that participate in (or critique) this narrative fuse together environmental and race politics. That is, this notion of an indigenous peoples on the cusp of extinction is not simply manufactured through romanticized depictions of nature imagery. It is a problematic version of Indianness that comes about not only through racism, nativism, or assimilationist sentiment, but also through its intricate connections with contemporaneous conservation politics and
discourse. While natural lands could be conserved and put to “wise use” so that resources would be available “for future generations,” talking/writing about and imagining the “record” of indigenous people through the same language and concepts creates problems. Although alive, native peoples are imagined as non-existent and as nationally useful as such. Although people, they are equated, even if implicitly, with non-human beings or objects and so are imagined to be naturally devoid of democratic political rights. And finally, although indigenous identity is complex, this conflation attempts to make quantifiable and categorical nativeness through non-native language and legal systems of thought that define native identity as located in the past and useful solely in terms of their memory and how this memory defines Americanness more broadly.

In this chapter, I explore how the concept of the eco-indigenous – and the problem of the absent/present native within it – become elements of a political critique in the literary work of two Sioux authors, Charles Alexander Eastman, Ohiyesa (Wahpeton Dakota), and Gertrude Bonnin, Zitkala-Sa (Yankton Nakota). Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s works comment on the way indigeneity, land, and citizenship are linked. Their stories, we will see, critique the position of American Indian subjects in the U.S. nation through a discourse which, as Homi Bhabha says, is “almost the same, but not quite” (115). The literary production of these two figures emerges alongside significant pieces

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2 Curtis himself was a member of the Harriman Alaska Expedition along with John Muir and Gifford Pinchot. This combination of people, all of whom I have discussed, indicates how closely connected – even in practice (not only discourses) – were studies of the environment and native peoples.
of environmental legislation – the Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Organic Act of 1916. These acts persist in legislating Indian personhood along with the natural areas of land that they intend to preserve. Examining Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s writings alongside these pieces of legislation highlights how a collapse in environmental and Indian reforms, although troubling in many ways, also gives these native authors a tool in fashioning a race critique. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Willa Cather’s *The Professor’s House* (1925), a novel that fictionalizes a conservationist sentiment and demonstrates the problematic nature of imagining a nation that has absorbed its native peoples geographically, racially, and culturally.

A version of the sentiment (and its implications) that Theodore Roosevelt and Edward Curtis express at the start of *the North American Indian* are narrated in legal form (just a year prior to Curtis’s first volume) in the Antiquities Act of 1906. The Antiquities Act grew out concern about the destruction of natural sites in the Southwest, much of the concern centering around Mesa Verde in Colorado. The Archaeological Institute of American (AIA) formed a Committee on the Preservation of the Ruins of American Antiquity in 1904 and lobbied for federal intervention in the misuse of these lands, particularly as a way to protect old Indian lands for archaeological study. The Act authorized the president “in his discretion, to declare by public proclamation historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States to be national monuments, and may reserve as a part thereof parcels of
land…to be protected.” Indian relics, nature sites, and built structures are conflated here as “antiquities” that can be named “national monuments.” No activity could be conducted upon the land without federal consent, and use of the land is explained clearly in the act as a scholarly pursuit: “That the examinations, excavations, and gatherings are undertaken for the benefit of reputable museums, universities, colleges, or other recognized scientific or educational institutions, with a view to increasing the knowledge of such objects, and that the gatherings shall be made for permanent preservation in public museums.” Roosevelt put the bill into action immediately, declaring eighteen national monuments in nine states, protecting more than a million acres.

The Antiquities Act merges conservationist ethic with the anthropological and archaeological rhetoric of salvage; natural lands and cultural products are simultaneously in need of “permanent preservation.” Indian cultures, Indian presence within the U.S., and native/U.S. conflicts over land are at the heart of the sentiment behind this act. The legal language of an environmental act connects directly with a scientific, historical, and

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3 Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek explain in American Indians and National Parks, though, that the geographical borders would have to be revised by addendum: “The 1906 Mesa Verde legislation included 42,000 acres of Indian land. Unfortunately, because of a faulty survey, almost none of the ruins were included. To redress this error, an amendment to the bill placed all unpatented prehistoric ruins on Indian and federal land located within five miles of the park boundary under control of Interior… Thus an additional 175,000 acres, much of it on an Indian reservation, fell under jurisdiction of Mesa Verde National Park” (34).

4 Beginning with Roosevelt, fifteen out of eighteen presidents have used the Antiquities Act, excluding Nixon, Reagan, and George H.W. Bush, most recently by George W. Bush for two sites. He issued Proclamation 7984 on February 27, 2006 to declare the 15,000 sq. ft. African Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan, NYC a national monument which would “present interpretative opportunities and programs to visitors to better understand and honor the cultural and vital contributions of generations of Africans and Americans of African descent to our Nation” (http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65294). Even more recently, Bush issued Proclamation 8031 to create the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument, the largest marine conservation in the world, encompassing 139,793 sq. miles.
archaeological interest in Indians here. The strange synthesis of nature and Indian relics under the rubric of “national monument” hints at an underlying connection between land and Indian peoples, around which this environmentalist law was designed. What I am sensing in the language and implication of the Antiquities Act does not take explicit expression until 1976, when, in Cappaert v. United States, the Supreme Court “found that the Act can be used to protect both a site and its rare inhabitants. The Court ruled that an underground pool and a unique species of desert fish inhabiting it were objects of historic or scientific interest that could be declared a national monument under the Act” (ipl.unm.edu/cwl/fedbook/antiquity.html). Indians, like the desert fish seventy years later, were implicitly connected with the lands to be preserved – they were the “rare inhabitants” of these areas and the nation as a whole.

In terms of Mesa Verde National Park at the beginning of the century, though, Southern Utes and Ute Mountain Utes (particularly the Muwach, Capote, and Wiminuche bands) were the inhabitants in question, although their living existence and presence on thousands of acres of this site does not seem to have registered in the public or legal discourse surrounding the act. Rather, only the geographical remains of a prior existence is monumentalized in the act – as if all Indians are dead and gone, and the land free of their habitation. This perception allows for an ecological practice of cultural salvation that incorporates indigenous peoples via remains or products rather than their living presences. That is, since their living presence on the federally possessed lands goes legally unrecognized, it is not the actual living indigenous peoples who are implicitly folded into this language of protection and preservation. Instead, it is only the memory of
them having once been there. Indian national status, read through the implications of this act, then, is one of paradoxical absence and presence. The ecological salvage of the reminders (and remains) of their presence on the land is a safe way to mark their bodies and cultures as American and is an effective way to strengthen the image of the U.S. as a nation with a significant cultural history rooted in its land. Mesa Verde still is described today as “the first national park set aside to preserve the works of humankind.” Critics have pointed out how this language of preservation is used in connection with indigenous peoples at this time more generally, but I want to fine-tune our attention to this association. In contextualizing this rhetoric of salvage specifically alongside the American Antiquities Act, we begin to see how Indian subjects are being appropriated quite explicitly by certain forms of environmentalist discourse and legalities as paradoxically absorbable into (and for) the nation when they are absent and as unabsorbable when they are present.

In *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts*, Chadwick Allen points out the link between national belonging and access to environmental resources: “This is a struggle over definitional control (who will be allowed to define themselves as ‘indigenous’) in which the stakes continue to be high: the right to claim tangible resources such as land, minerals, timber, and fisheries, as well as the right to claim intangible but nonetheless highly valuable political, social, and symbolic resources such as authenticity and legitimacy” (9). He focuses on World War II

5 http://www.nps.gov/meve/
through the 1970’s, a period marked as an “Indian renaissance,” arguing that indigenous writers at this time appropriated both indigenous and nonindigenous discourses to resist dominant narratives of blood, land and memory. I see this period as centered in a longer history, one that this chapter traces back to the moment when literary production, environmental politics, and native activism come together. Allen’s location of the “struggle for definitional control” in the mid-twentieth century positions native literary activism right in the moment when environmental politics were taking a new shape and visibility in the public arena; this position allows for a smooth connection between a “right to claim tangible [natural] resources” and a “right to claim…political, social and symbolic resources” in that it is an association created by environmental and civil rights discourses that were gaining mainstream currency in that moment. If we look at texts produced in the earlier moment of formalized environmentalism at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century and through the early part of the century, though, we can see how non-American Indian and American Indian writers were working through the foundation of this association between ecological conditions and political subjectivity.

Eastman and Zitkala-Sa emerged as significant political figures in this moment. Both attended boarding schools as children (Zitkala-Sa also taught at Carlisle for a stint) and both tell of this experience in autobiographies, a form that, when written by American Indians, Arnold Krupat defines as “a ground on which two cultures meet” and “the textual equivalent of the frontier” (30, 44). Eastman and Zitkala-Sa’s presence and contributions to literary and political production throw a wrench in the legislated concept of the ecologically absent/present Indian. Their literary production and public
performance are bookended by two key Indian reforms – the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 and the Citizenship Act of 1924. Just before Turner announced the closing of the U.S. frontier (in 1893), the Dawes Act of 1887 was enacted, breaking up Indian reservation and communal life for individual, privatized allotments of land. The Act linked the attainment of citizenship with a precise set of land interactions (specifically with the role of a farmer), naturalizing racial difference through the symbolic, legal and environmental absorption of the Indian into the nation as a property-holding citizen. The allotment-assimilation rhetoric in the act draws upon the language of natural resources, and it indicates how an environmentalist sentiment was being applied to race matters. Linking Indian policy reform with environmental reform, the Dawes Act both rectifies the so-called “Indian problem” and redefines U.S. land use. Although not a direct response to the enactment of this legislation, Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s writings indicate a sense for the ecological narrative of belonging that is at work within the Act and within broader cultural thought. We can see in both of their writings a familiar concept of eco-indigeneity based on the long-standing idea of American Indians having a natural capacity for living in the wild, but their versions of this concept are different from the assimilationist sentiment otherwise so prevalent.

In using a language of democracy and indigenous rights within the constraints of an assimilative eco-discourse that persisted in connecting the native with the natural, Eastman and Zitkala-Sa put forth a race critique that positions natives as equitable, rights-bearing members and participants in the U.S. nation. Examining their work in this light shows, generally, the complexity of an environmentalist sensibility that both fuels
assimilationism but also becomes a venue for political dissent. And in particular, it highlights the way Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s writings anticipate the potential for a political critique that brings together environmentalist thought and civil rights activism, a combination that would not take formalized shape until many decades after their work.

Lucy Maddox focuses on this turn of the century moment in her recent book *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race and Reform* in which she examines how “Native intellectuals, in attempting to create a public, political space for themselves, deliberately adopted, manipulated, and transformed the means already available to them for addressing white audiences, particularly the means of performance” (16). I hope that my work in this chapter will compliment Maddox’s argument for native intellectualism at the turn of the century. While she contextualizes this progressive intellectualism in acts of performance, I want to focus attention on how this “perform[ance of] a new civic identity” is complexly interconnected with contemporaneous environmentalist discourse. These performances, which I see as inextricably connected to their literary production, lay the literary and rhetorical groundwork for the shift in eco-politics that would occur in the next stage of the environmental movement.
II. The Literary Work of a “Real Indian,” Charles Eastman

“Perhaps you wonder how a ‘real, live Indian’ could write a book. I will tell you how. The story of this man’s life is itself as wonderful as a fairy tale.”

-Charles Eastman, Indian Child Life

In 1915, Charles Alexander Eastman and his wife, Elaine Goodale Eastman, opened their own summer camp for girls on Granite Lake in southern New Hampshire. They named the camp School of the Woods and described it as “The Summer Camp with a Difference,” the difference being that the activities were conducted by a “Real Indian.” The Eastmans opened Camp Ohiyesa for boys in 1916 as well. Eastman positions himself at the forefront of both of these camps (in one as the “Real Indian” who leads activities and in the other by naming it with his Indian name, Ohiyesa). By centering the camp activities as well as the discourse of a patriotism honed in wilderness practice around himself as an exemplary American Indian, Eastman subverts the centralized power of a figure like Richard Henry Pratt in boarding school institutions. The “Man-on-the-band-stand” to whom Carlisle Indian school’s paper Indian Helper attributes a watchful editorial eye was most likely Pratt himself who stood on a bandstand in the center of Carlisle’s campus to monitor student movement and activities. Eastman’s insertion of himself at the head of his camps positions an Indian, rather than the primary proponent of Indian assimilation, at the center of a wilderness pedagogy, rather than a western academic and industrial pedagogy. This radical shift in racial subject and

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6 They renamed it Camp Oahe in 1916.
institutional mission hint at the ways Eastman’s work revises notions of assimilation. His civic and political work in this moment centers around the Indian/“out-of-doors” link fostered in camps like these and in national organizations like the Boy Scouts and Camp-Fire Girls, and it takes distinctive literary form in the texts he publishes in the span of these two years.

*Indian Scout Talks* (1915) is Eastman’s literary contribution to the Boy Scout Movement. With chapters like “How to Make Friends with Wild Animals,” “The Language of Footprints,” and “Hunting With Sling-Shot and Bow and Arrow,” the book is intended to be an extensive manual on honing the skills of an outdoor life. It begins with a frontispiece entitled “Portrait of the Author, Dr. Charles A Eastman (Ohiyesa),” picturing Eastman standing in front of trees in full Santee Sioux dress [See Figure 1]; the photo captures his full headdress and an axe in his hands. A dedication following the image reads: “These chapters represent the actual experiences and first-hand knowledge of the author…. [It] may prove useful to all who venture into the wilderness in pursuit of wisdom, health, and pleasure…”7 The text introduces itself as a narrative of authenticity – an “actual and first-hand” account. It directly links a concept of authentic Indianness with a concept of authentic wilderness practice as an anecdote to “the brilliant selfishness of modern civilization!” (190).

The first two chapters quickly solidify this link. In “At Home With Nature,” Eastman teaches his reader that adaptability to nature is critical in building character, and

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7 See Charles A. Eastman, 1897. Photographic reproduction: From collections of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution. Photo no. 3463.
he connects primitivism with nature: “It is wonderful how quickly and easily one can adjust himself to his surrounds in wild life! How gentle is the wild man when at peace! How quick and masterful in action! Like him, we must keep nature’s laws, develop a sound, wholesome body, and maintain an alert and critical mind. Upon this basis, let us follow the trail of the Indian in his search for an earthly paradise!” (6). Early on, then, the book correlates Indianness, physicality (particularly the male “out-of-door body”) and nature. This correlation forges a careful conceptual link between land use practices and racial and cultural practices of Indians (he generally does not distinguish between tribes). Connecting land use and Indianness, nature and natives, is not unique to Eastman of course. There are two elements that make Eastman’s version different though. First, it is a native author rather than a non-native writing about Indians, and second, Eastman makes claim to a certain kind of authenticity because of his nativeness. The argument that something is more real, or to use Eastman’s words “actual,” from a certain subject position is certainly debatable. James Clifford argues: “Questionable acts of purification are involved in any attainment of a promised land, return to ‘original’ sources, or gathering up of a true tradition. Such claims to purity are in any event always subverted by the need to stage authenticity in opposition to external, often dominating narratives… If authenticity is relational, there can be no essence except as a political, cultural invention, a local tactic.” Eastman’s claim to an authentic Indianness is based on the long-standing native/nature link. This connection can be seen as “stag[ing] [his] authenticity in opposition to…dominating narratives,” as Clifford suggests. Eastman’s emphasis on the connection between nature and native as a model to replicate suggests to
me that Eastman’s self-fashioning of an authentic indigenous self also arms him with a potentially subversive “tactic” to enter into a broader narrative being written and legislated around native peoples.

Jennifer Bess argues that “…the influence of Pratt’s assimilationism…turns Eastman’s past, his very identity as and with Ohiyesa, into an inaccessible relic, dividing the boy from the man” (8). She asserts that Eastman operated within the conflicted position of subject and object, agent and inmate, rendering his boy-self a long lost Indian and his current man and author-self a practitioner of oppressive Euro-American language and narrative systems. “Both his culture and its environment are rendered static, knowable, controllable,” Bess adamantly asserts, “at the same time Ohiyesa himself seems to be displaced, denied agency and presence through the violent vehicle of the English language, through its images and Eastman’s use of the grammar that is posed to sacrifice the past to the future, the Indian to the man” (14). She extends her understanding of Eastman’s treatment of his young self to his treatment of the environment, suggesting that he “tames [it] through idyllic images that oddly recall the surveillance of early Western explorers conquering new lands” (13). Bess sees Eastman’s work as the result of violent assimilationism, imprisoning him in the concepts and language of his oppressors. She recognizes that there is something significant about Eastman’s literary engagement with the natural world – what she sees as a “pastoral[ization]” and “aestheticization” – and she senses that it is intricately connected with his acculturation, but her reading differs significantly from my own.
Indian Scout Talks seems the most relevant place to enter into Bess’s argument about the way Eastman deals with the environment in his work since it is, on the surface, intended to be an instructional book on how non-indigenous peoples can emulate native nature practices. Bringing my understanding of Eastman’s use of nature into conversation with Bess’s position helps show how complex even the concept of “environment” can be. While Bess defines it generally as “the setting of the story,” I am exploring how the environment is a complicated geographical, literary and symbolic site of politics and narratives. The way this convergence happens in Eastman’s texts marks the environment as a zone of democratic promise. While Eastman might be using a familiar language, the process of assimilation he is narrating is quite different than the kind Pratt supported. Bess suggests that “environment [is] rendered static, knowable, controllable” in his writing, but Eastman seems to be talking about transformation rather than stagnation when he says that individuals can “adjust [themselves] to [their] surroundings in wild life.” Undermining the anthropocentricism of human law, like Mary Austin, Eastman also asserts that “we must keep nature’s laws.” Rather than this being a “displace[ment or] deni[al of] agency,” as Bess reads his work, I understand it as a proclamation of agency via a significant rhetorical and conceptual shift in the context for communal belonging and democratic practice.

As a “Real Indian” who writes, speaks, and practices professionally in both white and Indian culture, Eastman gains the political currency to be what Tony Dykena-VanderArk calls a “…cross-cultural mediator, representative Indian and civilized American embodied in one spokesperson, offering in his recollections of the wild life not
only an engaging opportunity for imaginative identification on the part of his non-Indian readers but also an alternative, counter-cultural representation of Indian life” (27).

Eastman certainly is aware of his role as mediator, and the text itself models this mediation. He includes drawings, descriptions of how to translate an event in “picture writings,” stories, and lists of vocabulary. For instance, he includes a long list of “honor names for Boy Scouts” comprised of Indian words on the left and their English translation on the right. We can see how his text seems to be a translation project to a certain extent, and in using a collection of these forms, Eastman models in literary form the layers of cultural translation. As a compilation of these kinds of translations, his text becomes a hybrid thing, a reified version of what I think he is getting at in writing it; that it contains multiple narratives shows how the Indian has access, textual knowledge and expertise to move through all different means of story-telling, history-making, information passing, and it allows Eastman to suggest that Indian identity is multi-dimensional and multi-lingual. This text makes evident that Eastman, as an Indian, understands not only outdoorsman ways, but also that he understands that narrative works in multiple forms – visual, oral and written.

Eastman’s literary translations are linguistic, cultural and environmental. His stories are grounded in a land/nature discourse and, disguised in a familiar language of an Indian’s natural capacity for living in the wild, they fine tune what it means to enact environmentalist practices and what it means to be American Indian. The act of storytelling is a critical component in the multi-dimensionality of narrative and identity. He explains, “It is customary with the hunters and warriors to tell their stories of
adventure most minutely, omitting no geographical and topographical details, so that the boy who has listened to such stories from babyhood can readily identify places he has never before seen. This kind of knowledge is simple, and, like the every-day meal, it is properly digested and assimilated, and becomes a part of one’s self” (169). Eastman’s emphasis on the oral tale in this context is significant for a number of reasons. Arnold Krupat asserts in his essay “Postcolonialism, Ideology, and Native American Literature,” that Indian writers’ repeated indebtedness to oral traditions or oral stories as sources for parts of their narratives creates an “invented tradition” (78). Writers’ experiences with traditional languages and narratives are, of course, quite varied, Krupat points out, but their evocation of an influential oral tradition—“all of them insist on the storytelling of the oral tradition as providing a context, as bearing on and influencing the writing of their novels, poems, stories or autobiographies” (78) – suggests to him that while there certainly are “real” oral traditions experienced by these authors, the ways in which these traditions are repeatedly called to the forefront of their writing process shows that it is a rhetorical device: “…‘the oral tradition’ as it is usually invoked in these contexts is a kind of catchall phrase whose function is broadly to name the source of the difference between the English of Native writers and that of Euroamerican writers. This ‘tradition’ is not based on historically or culturally specific instances” (78). Krupat’s sense of authors’ use of the oral as a rhetorical tactic is helpful here in that it offers a way to think about Eastman’s emphasis on storytelling in relation to an authentic eco-indigeneity. Krupat demonstrates how we can view this use of storytelling as both an important part of a culture and as a performative literary tool so that Eastman’s emphasis on the natural
native does not have to be an essentialization of identity, but can be viewed as a way to call upon a trope. Storytelling is not only about narration and culture, but it is a particular system of knowing the land for Eastman; it offers a certain “kind of knowledge” that allows listeners in the exchange to gain knowledge without or prior to the actual land experience.

The reader is brought into this storytelling exchange as well. “…[E]very traveler has left his mark upon the clean, white surface for you to decipher… you must proceed to construct your story” (27). Land surface and paper/pages are conflated in his image of a “clean, white surface,” and footprints and written inscription are conflated in the image of a “traveler [who] has left his mark.” Eastman is positioning the reader of Indian Scout Talks as this certain kind of reader, “you” who “construct your story” while “decipher[ing]” the “mark[s]” made on both geographical land and the literary page. He suggests, then, that the text itself is a bit of land, a kind of literary terrain with which his readers engage as they would with a geographical terrain. Reading his book is equated with listening to oral “talks” and with walking upon a land. He also uses the language of “digestion” which we see in Americanization/assimilationist rhetoric of the time, suggesting again that his text is working to present a different version of adaptation; rather than the racial or ethnic outsider as undergoing this assimilative process, it is the non-Indian reader who needs to absorb a different kind of narrative and knowledge, one that is lodged in nature. Eastman is both constructing and teaching his reader how to participate in a system of organic national belonging that merges the literary, the land, and the indigenous.
This convergence is essential for Eastman, and the final step in his eco-narrative bridges it with democratic practice. Chastising capitalist/consumerist use of natural resources, Eastman argues that “The good things of earth are not his to hold against his brothers, but they are his to use and enjoy together with his fellows, to whom it is his privilege to bring them. In seeking thus, he develops a wholesome, vigorous body and mind, to which all exertion seems play, rather than painful toil for possession’s sake… Gallant, patriotic, public-spirited – in the Indian is the lusty youth of humanity” (189). Eastman turns directly to progressivist rhetoric and concepts here, suggesting that communal use of resources – a concept that comprised conservationism also – allows for a strengthening of body, enabling the development of a strong, “patriotic [and] public spirited” citizen. The language of reform that draws upon ideas of citizenship and nationalism helps Eastman to position the Indian as the physical and symbolic embodiment of ideal American qualities.

Lucy Maddox also recognizes the relevance of democracy in Eastman’s situating of the Indian as a powerful figure in the nation. She suggests that “For Eastman, the Indian ideal provided a model of democratic citizenship that set into relief the debasements of a society driven by materialism, greed, a love of ease, and the corruption of political ambition. Eastman’s writings, taken together, constitute a sustained argument for the conclusion…. that the American Indian is in fact the most appropriate representation of all that America has professed but failed to be” (132). While Maddox focuses primarily on Eastman’s work in the Society of American Indians (SAI), my addition to her argument is that we carefully consider Eastman’s persistent engagement
within an environmentalist discourse, and that we see his sociopolitical participation in this realm and the literary production that accompanies it as critical tools in constructing this representation. This discourse gives him the language and a site in which he can contextualize his broader arguments about Indians in the U.S.

By the end of *Indian Scout Talks*, Eastman makes a direct link between the Boy Scout and the Indian as environmental practitioners of land and democracy: “Every boy, from the beginning of his training, is an embryo of a public servant. He puts into daily practice the lessons that in this way become part of himself... He takes his pay in the recognition of the community and the consciousness of unselfish service. Let us have more of this spirit of the American Indian, the Boy Scout’s prototype, to leaven the brilliant selfishness of our modern civilization!” (190). Eastman connects Indianness with an ideal public persona, positioning the Indian as an ideal member of a national community. This connection is significant in this particular moment as the guiding premises of the Boy Scouts were changing. Philip J. Deloria marks this moment as one in which “antimodern Indians lost cultural power” and conflicting sets of interests framing the Boy Scout principles – Ernest Thompson Seton’s emphasis on Indians, conservation and nature study and Daniel Carter Beard’s emphasis on pioneering and American ingenuity – reflect this change (110). Deloria explains:

Although Seton had argued successfully for almost fifteen years that Indianness represented a crucial component of modern American identity, the nativist refigurings of national Self generated by World War I gave Beard an opening to reassert the patriotic character of his buckskin scouts. The war turned questions of American identity away from the temporary anxieties of modernity and refocused them on national and societal differences, especially in relation to the European countries. Beard’s pioneers provided a time-honored icon of
progressive, civilizing America, an icon that folded easily into scouting’s military framework… His masculine can-do and scouting’s Be Prepared proved to be more evocative pieces of wartime rhetoric than Seton’s suddenly dovish Indianesque nature study… Indians – patriotic in Seton’s estimation – were being reimagined as the antithesis of American patriotism. (110)

Eastman’s writing resists this division between nativeness and patriotism. For him, public servitude is based on a certain land practice that he suggests Indians enact and others only can emulate; essentially, then, Americanness is based on an Indianness defined by broad nature concepts and land use. Democracy is founded upon and ideally practiced by native peoples for him.

*Indian Scout Talks* is an under-discussed text, one that I see as very important in understanding how Eastman, as a native author, is working out conceptual connections among Indianness, narrative, storytelling and nature/land use ethics and practices. I have tried to show how Eastman positions the environmental practices of the Indian as the foundation of and model for an ecologized American identity. National community grows out of a certain land ethic constructed through careful narrative/storytelling, and the complexity of these stories (exemplified in the hybridity of his book) indicates the complexity of national belonging and democratic practice. Eastman’s attempt to show a link between environmentalist and democratic practices becomes clearer still in his autobiography *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (1916). Raymond Wilson, in his 1977 introduction, calls the book “a social and historical document” (xii). What makes this book so special, he argues, is that “As an educated Indian and author, Eastman was a rarity. His assimilation and acculturation had been unique. Both cultures accepted him, and, in turn, he tried to get them to accept each other” (xii). Eastman, in Wilson’s eyes,
is a “mediator between two often conflicting cultures” (vii), a position that Dykena-VanderArk calls “a cross-culture mediator,” as I mentioned earlier. Philip Deloria pushes this mediation role a bit further, by naming Eastman a “bridge figure” who “use[s] antimodern primitivism to defend native cultures against the negative stereotypes left over from colonial conquest” (122). Deloria offers Eastman agency, giving him an assertive project and political practice:

…Eastman, in applying primitivism to cultural politics, moved away from Dakota traditions and toward a complex, multiple-mirror, bicultural mimesis. When Eastman donned a literary headdress, he was connecting himself to his Dakota roots. But he was also – perhaps more compellingly – imitating non-Indian imitations of Indians. As he reflected an American image back at American youth, he simultaneously challenged and redirected other, more negative stereotypes about Indians. But Eastman’s Indian mimicry invariably transformed his construction of his own identity—both as a Dakota and as an American. He lived out a hybrid life, distinct in its Indianness but also cross-cultural and assimilatory. By channeling both a Dakota past and an American-constructed Indian Other through his material body—from mind to pen to paper to book to Boy Scout—Eastman made it ever more difficult to pinpoint the cultural locations of Dakotas and Americans, reality and mimetic reality, authenticity and inauthenticity. (123)

Deloria pinpoints the fluctuating complexity of Eastman’s public and literary persona here. I extend his argument by attending more thoroughly than Deloria to the way Eastman’s environmentalist sentiment functions as the galvanizing force in this mimetic process. The pattern that Deloria lays out—from mind to pen to paper to book to Boy Scout” is charged with and motored by an environmentalist sentiment that enables Eastman to insert himself into the public arena and Indians into the national narrative that imagines its citizens as ecological beings. Eastman’s use of “antimodern primitivism” works precisely because environmentalist concepts, laws, and discourses were circulating
and overlapping with the land use and citizenship laws defining Indian status in the nation at this time. Eastman’s language and stories could sit within the places of overlap between environmentalist and Indian reform, allowing him to undermine sociocultural perceptions and jurisprudential definitions of Indianness. I turn now to *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* to show how this dynamic functions in his texts that, unlike *Indian Scout Talks*, are not clearly definable as environmentally invested.

The title of Eastman’s autobiography suggests an assimilative process that frames the move from Indian to white culture, and Indian to American life as a development from wilderness to civilization. While *Indian Scout Talks* opens with a photograph of Eastman wearing a headdress, *From the Deep Woods* opens with a studio portrait of Eastman in a suit, focused on his profile, depicted only from the mid-torso, his hands out of view [See Figure 2]. This change in image marks a shift in the way Eastman performs his physical self and cultural identity for the different texts. Taken together, these images photographically depict the progress implied in the title *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*. But, taking my earlier readings of *Indian Scout Talks* into consideration here, this transition, supposedly from a wilderness life to a civilized one, may not be as clear-cut as it seems. Maddox also notes this uneasiness: “…Eastman presents the course of his career, and his maturing generally, as a process of increasing disenchantment with the grubby realities and blatant hypocrisies of American political life… Eastman may therefore have embedded an irony in the title of *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*, given that the trajectory indicated by the title is a complex one, and any valorization of the ‘civilization’ that is its end point is ambivalent at best” (131). Navigating the “deep
woods,” we have seen, is a practice that Eastman celebrates, one that must be taught and honed just as “civilized” ways are taught, one that requires a different kind of assimilative process, and one that ultimately highlights the potential strength of an individual and nation. Acknowledging the relevance of environmentalist practices and of Indians as skilled practitioners of these practices in the national community flattens the trajectory of his title and merges the “deep woods” with “civilization.”

In the first chapter, “The Way Opens,” Eastman begins his life story by locating his young self in the wilderness: “[T]he first thing for me to accomplish was to adapt myself perfectly to natural things – in other words, to harmonize myself with nature. To this end I was made to build a body both symmetrical and enduring” (2). Eastman pays immediate attention to “the body” and to “consciously train[ing] to be a man,” and he conflates a disciplining of the body with adapting to one’s land environment (1). Reading this together with the portrait that just precedes it in the book, we can see how the text sustains a double concept of adaptation – to nature and to a nation. Floating within his discussion of land adaptation is the hint of cultural assimilation, then, showing naturalization to be an ecological process of both geographical/physiological adaptation and cultural/national adaptation. Eastman gives his reader a dual image of himself as an adaptive entity, an Indian child who grows into this “civilized” man – both of which are “trained,” learned, disciplined roles.

At the same time, though, Eastman makes his affiliations clear by using language like “nation,” “country,” and “my people” to discuss Sioux peoples (2). This nationalist rhetoric allows him to move quickly and unassumingly into a scathing exposure of the
land-based mistreatment of Indians: “My people had been turned out of some of the finest country in the world, now forming the great states of Minnesota and Iowa. The Americans pretended to buy the land at ten cents an acre, but never paid the price; the debt stands unpaid to this day” (3). Eastman’s discussion of the naturalized disciplining of the body leads directly into this comment on Indian land/treaty rights, exemplifying his discursive connection between a notion of organic adaptation and the conditions of democratic right. An environmentalist sentiment underlies and mediates this connection between naturalized assimilation and democratic practice, and it is sharpened when he tells the story of becoming a farm laborer during his first summer as a student:

It was here and now that my eyes were opened intelligently to the greatness of Christian civilization, the ideal civilization, as it unfolded itself before my eyes. I saw it as the development of every natural resource; the broad brotherhood of mankind; the blending of all languages and the gathering of all races under one religious faith. There must be no more warfare within our borders; we must quit the forest trail for the breaking-plow, since pastoral life was the next thing for the Indian. I renounced finally my bow and arrows for the spade and pen… (57-58)

The language of civilization, collectivity, and farming that he uses throughout indicates that this passage is one about (and one that would have been read at the time as pertinent to) national, specifically U.S., belonging. When he asserts that assimilation is a “development of every natural resource,” Eastman makes a precise connection between acculturation and the optimal use of natural resources. This association links the language of assimilation with the language of conservation, framing national membership as an aspect of environmental conservation. The unmentioned citizen, the “we” who leaves the “forest trail” to put the plough and pen to use, is fashioned into a natural
resource who ―blend[s]‖ into ―the gathering of all races.” His vision of the Indian emerging out of a wilderness existence and into one of “spade and pen” equates the practices of farming and writing. The responsibilities of this new kind of citizen are to put both the spade to its job tilling the land and the pen to its job writing on paper. The product of the tilling and the product of the writing, by extension, also are conflated.

Earlier in the autobiography, Eastman gives an account of his Christianized father instructing him: “I think the way of the white man is better than ours, because he is able to preserve on paper the things he does not want to forget. He records everything – the sayings of his wise men, the laws enacted by his counselors” (28). Eastman’s merging of farming and writing puts this type of “preserv[ation]” into effect, and his autobiography becomes the reified culmination of literary tilling, a literary way to enact preservationism. Since working the land and writing on paper are shown to be two kinds of inscription – similar to the dynamic I tracked in Mary Austin’s text in my previous chapter – these geographical and literary inscriptions are mutually-sustaining narratives, making the act of storytelling a kind of environmental practice, and marking Eastman’s text a practice and product of living on the land.

Eastman makes his final move to democratic practice in the final chapter of the book when he lays out his mission:

My chief object has been, not to entertain, but to present the American Indian in his true character before Americans…[R]ally it was a campaign of education of the Indian and his true place in American history…

The philosophy of the original American was demonstrably on a high plane, his gift of eloquence, wit, humor and poetry is well established; his democracy and community life was much nearer the ideal than ours to-day. It was not until I felt that I had to a degree established these claims, that I consented to
appear on the platform in our ancestral garb of honor. I feel that I was a pioneer in this new line of defense of the native American, not so much of his rights in the land as of his character and religion. I am glad that the drift is now toward a better understanding, and that he has become the acknowledged hero of the Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls, as well as many artists, sculptors, and sincere writers. (187, 188-9)

Ultimately, Eastman works to revise the narrative of U.S. history by re-inserting natives into the story of the nation. He asserts without hesitation that knowledge, literary production (eloquence and poetry), community-formation, and democratic practice are more refined among “the original American.” Donning his “ancestral garb” in order “to appear on the platform” is the outcome of this equation, and it situates Eastman himself as the public spokesperson for those whom he has suggested are democratic models.

Eastman says here that his mission was less about land rights than it was about developing an understanding of “character and religion,” but the omnipresence of land experience in his discussions indicates that his narrative is working through and producing something more complicated than such a clear split between “rights in the land” and “character and religion.” The “better understanding” of natives that he says he has seen is couched in two domains: scouting institutions that are modeled after the Indian “hero” and the literary and visual arts. Nature practice and the arts become the sites of entrance into the national community, and his highlighting of them simultaneously in this passage indicates again how he is working out a connection between environmental and literary practices. By mentioning “rights in the land” but not addressing them directly in this passage, Eastman elicits the legal and political freedoms
that implicitly are the more broadly encompassing goals of fostering a “better understanding” of natives.

That Eastman ultimately is invested in the legal/political “right” of the American Indian, and that this is something connected intricately with nature practices is emphasized in his deliberate shift to talk of race. Directly following this passage and mention of the scouting/arts link, Eastman moves into a discussion of his role in “represent[ing] the North American Indian at the First Universal Congress in London, England, in 1911… [comprised of] 53 different nationalities, come together to mutually acquaint themselves with one another’s progress and racial ideals” (189). He focuses on the sense of equity among all participants in the Congress: “What impressed me most was the perfect equality of the races… It was declared at the outset that there is no superior race, and none inferior…” (189). Although brief, his account is saturated with this language of racial equality – common during the Progressive Era, but not a rhetoric he employs until this particular moment in his autobiography. He moves out of this language just as quickly as he moved into it, turning now to a succinct mention of his investment in the Boy Scout movement: “My work for the Boy Scouts, whose program appeals to me strongly, has given me a good deal of practice in camp management, finally leading to the organization of summer camps for both boys and girls… [in which] my whole family are enthusiastic helpers in the development of this form of open-air education, patterned largely upon my own early training” (193). Looking at these three passages together – from scouting and the arts, to racial equality, to the fostering of an outdoor life through camps – we can see how the text produces a narrative of
contemporary environmentalist practice linked with national membership, an association in the center of which Eastman situates himself specifically and the American Indian generally.

Eastman’s use of his autobiography as a means to discuss and to enact a revisionary narrative of the U.S. that takes natives into account as racially, culturally, and politically equitable does not necessarily track a clear, linear development “from the deep woods to civilization,” then. He is able to redefine concepts of wilderness and civilization through imagining nature practice as a crucial component in democratic practice. The “Indian” at the start of his text becomes the “American Indian” by its close. Eastman’s final, somewhat ambivalent passage reads: “I am an Indian, and while I have learned much from civilization, for which I am grateful, I have never lost my Indian sense of right and justice…. Nevertheless, so long as I live, I am an American” (195). While Eastman asserts his identification with both communities, it is clear that he connects with Indianness specifically in terms of what he deems a sense of “justice.” Broadly situating the Indian as democratically-invested, while also personally identifying as an “American,” Eastman offers a model of democratic Americanness founded upon a contemporary American Indian ideal. Showing how his early life as an “Indian” and his literary life as an “American Indian” are environmentally charged, his vision of Americanness becomes rooted in an ideal eco-democracy put into place specifically by Native Americans in their early nature practices and in the ways these practices have been translated into contemporary democratic, land and literary practices, systems and identities within the broader U.S. Ultimately, Eastman’s environmentalist sentiment
becomes a rhetorical tool for positioning himself in a public and political arena, and for situating the Indian as a crucial member of the national collective.

III. Uprooted Trees:
Reading Environmentalist Sensibility in Zitkala-Sa’s Literary Works

“They are on Indian reservations – small remnants of land not shown on our maps. They are in America, but their environment is radically different from that surrounding other American children…. Painful discrepancies in the meaning of American freedom to the Indian [have resulted].”

-Zitkala-Sa, “Americanize the First American” (1921)

Like Charles Eastman, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, who later chose to be called Zitkala-Sa, made an entrance into literary production by way of autobiography and the retelling of traditional Indian tales. The stories Zitkala-Sa tells are, in my estimation, more directly activist and explicit in their political criticism. Most of the semiautobiographical stories in American Indian Stories, were published in Atlantic Monthly between 1900 and 1902, but Zitkala-Sa published them together, along with two new pieces and “America’s Indian Problem” in 1921. Environmental conditions and access to natural resource are matters of concern in this collection. The reader is introduced to the white man, the “paleface,” specifically through the lens of resources:

“…[S]he pointed to the hill where my uncle and my only sister lay buried. ‘There is what the paleface has done! Since then your father too has been buried in a hill nearer the rising sun. We were once very happy. But the paleface has stolen our lands and driven us
hither. Have defrauded us of our land, the paleface forced us away”” (69). This first mention of contact between Indian and white cultures immediately establishes how environmental and race politics are merged, a connection that takes fuller shape throughout this specific text and in additional political texts.

Zitkala-Sa turns to ecological imagery when, as a teacher, she retrospectively comments on her boarding school education: “Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God. I was shorn of my branches, which had waved in sympathy and love for home and friends. The natural coat of bark which had protected my oversensitive nature was scraped off to the very quick. Now a cold pole I seemed to be, planted in a strange earth” (112). She emphatically equates her forced assimilation to environmental destruction here. The image broadly connects problems of sociocultural and racial difference with environmental language, and it particularly suggests that they both demonstrate violences. This plant metaphor shows Zitkala-Sa herself as a viciously “uprooted” and debarked tree now planted in an unsustainably poor soil. Zitkala-Sa is simultaneously imagining herself as a natural, organic entity and imagining this organicness/naturalness abruptly destroyed. She goes from fertile and organic to a destroyed and marketable/exchangeable product for the white man, a salable part of “the small forest of Indian timber” (113). Ecological language and environmental imagery
allow her to show the ravaging violences of racial and cultural oppression through aggressive but somewhat disguised language and metaphors of the natural native.  

This environmental symbolism evolves into an explicit discussion of native lands later in *American Indian Stories*, most notably in “The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue-Star Woman” (which was one of the additional pieces included in the 1921 edition). This story tells of a woman’s struggle to retain her land after the passing of the Dawes Act, a process that requires she give evidence of her familial genealogy; having been orphaned as a child, coupled with her belief in “the old, old teachings of her race that names of the dead [and of oneself] should not be idly spoken,” Blue-Star Woman is unable to prove legally to the government her right to the land (144). The narrator jokes, “Blue-Star Woman was unable to find even a twig of her family tree” (144). When two native men trick her into sharing half of her land and money with them if they secure her the land, Chief High Flier on the Sioux Indian Reservation is informed of Blue-Star Woman’s enrollment in his tribe and her right to a portion of their lands. In distress, he writes a letter of protest (since she is not of his tribe and hence not entitled to land that belongs to Sioux peoples); while on route to the post office, he burns the letter to send his message to the “prominent American woman” recipient rather than giving it to “the bureaucrats,” and is promptly arrested by Indian police who accuse him of being “one of

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8 Note the remarkable difference in Mary Austin’s earlier sentiment of Indians “liv[ing] like trees” in *The Land of Little Rain* and Zitkala-Sa’s use of this image to comment on cultural violence. Also, George Bird Grinnell refers to a tribe as a tree that “white neighbors” want to “cut…down.” Zitkala-Sa’s use of this imagery emerges two decades later with new force.
the bad Indians…opposing the government all the time” and of trying to set fire to the government agency (152).

While imprisoned, Chief High Flier has a vivid dream of the Statue of Liberty (which we learn is the “American woman” to whom he has sent his letter) surrounded by “a vast multitude of women with uplifted hands” (152). She becomes the ultimate image of hope and freedom for the Chief: “It was she, who, though representing human liberty, formerly turned her back upon the American aborigine. Her face was aglow with compassion. Her eyes swept across the outspread continent of America, the home of the red man…. Her light penetrated Indian reservations. A loud shout of joy rose up from the Indians of the earth, everywhere!” (153). This vision lends Chief High Flier the strength to serve his sentence with dignity, when upon release, he is greeted by the same two men with whom Blue-Star Woman dealt, and must sign over half of his land to them for their aid in having him released from jail.

Published right after the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote, Zitkala-Sa clearly is appealing to white women to take up the cause of American Indian rights, positioning them as “compassionate” citizens who have the capacity to work to rectify these wrongs (an appeal that she makes directly in the essay following this story in the book): “Now the time is at hand when the American Indian shall have his day in court through the help of the women of America” (165). In addition, though, this story works through the layers of complexity that connect civil rights with land rights. She moves quite deliberately out of the symbolic ecological language we saw earlier into a clear discourse of land-centered liberty. As a result, her story is fiercely critical of the effects
of Dawes legislation, and it shows how legal procedures of allotment merged with processes of assimilation and cultural violence (not only between whites and Indians, but among Indians themselves whose internal relations are “the by-product of an unwieldy bureaucracy over the nation’s wards,” 147). This story is followed only by “America’s Indian Problem” in American Indian Stories (another piece that was included in the 1921 edition), indicating to me how the ecological language Zitkala-Sa uses throughout her stories allows her to build up into a final critique of the political positioning of the American Indian in the U.S. This narrative development from ecological symbolism to a critique of the effects of allotment legislation to a direct call to bring the American Indians who “were dispossessed of their country” into the citizenry of the U.S. tracks her use of environmental discourse as a venue in which native civil rights can be addressed. Zitkala-Sa’s work engages with the problem of environmental conditions in relation to cultural survival, and it makes a clear connection between this relationship and national membership.

While writing, Zitkala-Sa also is elected secretary of the Society of American Indians and becomes editor of American Indian Magazine, the Society’s publication, from 1916 to 1920. An article published in the magazine in 1918 pinpoints the moment of transition in the way Zitkala-Sa figures the environmental into her arguments for Indian citizenship. In “Indian Gifts to Civilized Man,” Zitkala-Sa positions the Indian as a necessary contributor to the wellbeing of the nation in a moment of war. Through careful “communion” with Changing Woman, “Indian Mother-Nature,” Indians “have brought forth from insignificant plants, the acclimated and perfected corn and potato,”
crops which she argues in the rest of the essay are vital in the wartime practice of “food conservation” (184). Zitkala-Sa correlates this agricultural contribution with military service, suggesting that both farming and military action are patriotic practices of national service. This correlation participates in a broader national rhetoric being used at this time which called citizens, particularly women, to participate in the war effort from home via their food consumption practices. The War Time Cook and Health cookbook, published in 1912, for instance, explained “How you can serve your country” by altering the use of meat, milk, wheat, etc. and by buying food products locally. “Help our country by giving this daily service,” it admonishes, “Do your utmost.”

Foods That Will Win the War and How to Cook Them followed in 1918, containing not only recipes but also images of the U.S. Food Administration guidelines: “Save wheat…meat…fats…sugar,” one of them reads, “and serve the cause of freedom.”

Contextualizing Zitkala-Sa’s connection between farming and military action in this rhetoric indicates that her argument would have sounded quite familiar to her readers, giving her leeway to insert American Indians as critical contributors within this system. She argues that both acts contribute to “America[’s]…defense of world democracy,” and she positions the Indian at the forefront of these patriotic practices, implying that, whether given legal citizenship or not, they enact the values and sentiments of Americanness most fully (185). She marks a certain kind of natural ability to navigate in nature as their most important quality out on an actual battlefield: “Being…so much at

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* http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/dynaweb/eaa/cookbooks/ck0075/
* http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/1/5/4/6/15464/15464-h/15464-h.htm

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home in the out-of-doors, he may be an invaluable guide to our boys born and bred indoors” (184). In positioning the native as the ideal American, Zitkala-Sa connects the rhetoric of patriotism with the language of ecological cultivation: “The undaunted self-sacrifice of America’s aboriginal son challenges your patriotism and mine…Well may we strive to cultivate in our hearts a better acquaintance with the Indian in our midst. He is just as worth while as the potato patch we are weeding and the cornfield we are plowing” (186). Her use of the word “cultivate” here uses an environmentalist image to bring together farming (the cultivation of crops) with the nurturing of patriotic devotion (the cultivation of a sense of national dedication). The essay’s concluding sentence conflates American Indians with agricultural crops, equating the usefulness of the Indian with the usefulness of the potato and cornfields. The Indian becomes a natural resource for nationalist purposes, although in a different way than I tracked in Chapter One. Just as food products are being recognized in this moment as important to the welfare of the nation, in positioning the Indian as the cultivators of these crops Zitkala-Sa asserts a new relevance (natural and vital) to the presence of Indians in the citizen body. Implicit in this is a connection between the necessity for food conservation and the necessity for the conservation of the Indian in the citizenry, both as a means to strengthen the nation.

Overall, Zitkala-Sa uses an environmentalist argument to position the Indian as essential to the welfare of the nation. Rather than just seeing them as the cultivated as I proposed we see happening in earlier texts about racial and ethic others, American Indians become the cultivators themselves, nurturing the growth of actual plants and symbolic patriotism.
They are not just the plant to whom the gardener must tend but also the gardeners tending to the duties of an environmentally-based democratic “freedom.”

The Indian is the original practitioner of ecological sustainability here, and these foods and practice help sustain not only physical wellbeing (i.e., sustenance), but contribute to the cultivation of national pride and strength. That is, Indians model how ecological sustainability – the sustainable cultivation and consumption of ecological products – is the foundation for national sustainability. Zitkala-Sa’s essay lodges these sustainabilities in a kind of ecological literacy: “…the Red Man… gave us his corn and potato. Our real appreciation may not find expression in words…. [O]ur gratitude to the Indian for these gifts is demonstrated by our vast fields, so eloquent in their abundant annual crops. Truly, these speak louder than words” (184). A fertile land becomes a kind of fluent language here – land production tells a story and offers a history in which Indians are deeply implicated. This eco-narrative positions the American Indian as an integral participant in an eco-national history and story.

Cathy Davidson and Ada Norris suggest that we read the collection of stories gathered together in American Indian Stories as “a literary manifesto” (67). Her literary production and public persona emerge out of what they call “political consciousness” which locates her “as a mediator between tribal, bureaucratic, and activist contexts” (xxiv). Zitkala-Sa’s work as a public intellectual positions her in the crux of these roles, her encompassing political investment being civil rights for all American Indians, particularly U.S. citizenship. The environmentalist sensibility that I have been tracking is a critical component in bringing this political agenda to fruition, an essential narrative
element that I hope illuminates an additional layer of complexity to Zitkala-Sa’s work. Maddox argues: “The spirits of the Indian dead retain their own memories, and what they remember are ‘Old Earth trails’ – the landscapes of the physical world in which they once lived. Nature thus links the living and the dead, the modern educated woman and her tribal forebears, through a deep, instinctive, shared memory” (151). While Maddox offers this as a reading of a particular story in American Indian Stories, “A Dream of Her Grandfather,” I suggest that “landscapes” are featured in Zitkala-Sa’s work to narrate a type of “survivance” (to use Gerald Vizenor’s term) that is more complete than maintaining tribal memory. Nature itself – that is, actual land – and a literary/political environmentalist sensibility both function as ways to create Indian kinship across history and assimilation, and they offer venues in which Zitkala-Sa can insert the Indian into U.S. culture as an important constituent of the nation. From environmental symbolism to discussion of ecological resources, Zitkala-Sa forges a link between the democratic capacity of the Indian and ecological cultivation – at the moment of formalized environmentalism, this discourse is familiar and publicly marketable. I propose that we see Zitkala-Sa at the forefront of a political discourse that would not come to fruition until many decades later around environmental justice concerns; she constructs her literary environmentalist sensibility around a careful link between the native non-citizen and ecological productivity or destruction. Their membership in the nation is equated with land ethic and the cultivation or obliteration of ecological elements.

I do not intend to suggest that Zitkala-Sa is invested explicitly in matters of environmental justice (this concept being anachronistic in the early twentieth century, for
one thing), nor that she necessarily would have identified as environmentalist, but it seems to me that we can see in her work the groundwork being laid for writers and activists who would later take up these concerns quite deliberately at the end of the century. “We are seeking to know justice,” she proclaims in a 1919 piece about the Peace Conference, “not as a fable but as a living, active, practical force in all that concerns our welfare!” (191). Full citizenship in a democratic nation is the answer for “little peoples seeking freedom” for her, and just as the environmental justice movement made clear at the end of the century, Zitkala-Sa equates the struggle for social justice with the struggle for equitable environmental conditions (192). Zitkala-Sa’s “California Indian Trails and Prayer Trees,” the first in a series of four articles published in the San Francisco Bulletin and then the California Indian Herald in 1922, makes this link more explicitly: “Catastrophe it was when both the big trees and the ancient race of red men fell under the ax of a nineteenth-century invasion. Could their every wound find tongue I am sure not only pebbles but mountains of stone would rise up in protest” (251). Indians and trees are conflated here in terms of their common victimization. She connects the ravaging of the trees with the ravaging of “red men,” equating the violence done to ecological resources with the physical and cultural violence done to native peoples. This passage shows a finer-tuned and more explicit way of engaging environmental language than her early comparison between herself and an uprooted tree which I discussed above. “New laws have sprung up in the tracks of the destroyers to protect, at least, our big trees,” Zitkala-Sa asserts, “When will our hearing become sensitive enough to catch the Indian mother’s prayer wafted broadcast by the ancient trees of our forests?” (251). The
prayer trees, according to the practice she details earlier in the essay, bear inscriptions in their uppermost leaves, inscribed by mothers as a sign of hope and protection when both their children and the trees are in their sapling stages. The trees come to bear a collection of native familial narratives, and implicit in their environmental conservation is the cultural conservation of native peoples and cultures. Zitkala-Sa is telling us about an ecological narrative of genealogy here – sustaining these “big trees” means sustaining both Indian family lines and a form of environmental literacy (a way to ensure that Indians can retain much more than “a twig of [their] family tree”). In addition to laws made to protect these entities from “the destroyers,” Zitkala-Sa suggests that citizens need quite literally to tune in (she uses a radio metaphor at the end of this essay) to hear these eco-narratives. Zitkala-Sa is restructuring the terms of organic citizenship here; by showing a complex connection between storytelling, nature, American Indian culture, and democratic practice, Zitkala-Sa produces a mode of national membership that emerges out of an exchange of environmentalist narrative, a narrative founded on the synthesis of social justice and conservation issues.

Like Charles Eastman, Zitkala-Sa employs an environmentalist rhetoric that positions the Native American as a valid member and citizen of the U.S. Zitkala-Sa, though, is more forceful and her intentions made more explicit. While Eastman’s autobiography concludes with a statement identifying himself as “Indian” and “American,” Zitkala-Sa’s ends with the overtly political article “America’s Indian Problem” in which she focuses on the necessary “enfranchise[ment]” of native peoples, both of which I discussed earlier. Among other critics, Sandra Kumamoto Stanley notes
how Zitkala-Sa……: “[r]efusing to have any of the signifiers of her otherness erased, [and] eschewing a language of accommodation, enacted a strategy of subversion and inversion in her autobiography” (65). Through this resistance, Zitkala-Sa’s work proposes, ultimately, that the nation revise its jurisprudential and sociocultural narratives of American Indians: “Americanize the first Americans….Let no one deprive the American Indians of life, liberty or property without due process of law” (“Bureaucracy Versus Democracy” 246). Zitkala-Sa’s comment echoes constitutional language. She is writing the Indian into the constitution here, suggesting that the political enfranchisement of Native Americans as citizens is, in part, a discursive act, one that requires the synthesis of narratives. When we look at the use of an environmentalist sensibility in her writings, we can see that Zitkala-Sa’s work revises her contemporaneous concept of “Americaniz[ation]”; rather than being a purely assimilative practice, her work seems to suggest a different kind of naturalization than the one I have tracked in writers and social reformers dealing with the ethnic other in the nation. Membership in the nation is rooted in the participation in an eco-democracy, and like Eastman, Zitkala-Sa’s work puts the American Indian at the forefront of these environmentally-charged democratic practices.
IV. Americanness Through Indian Play and Organicism:
Willa Cather’s *The Professor’s House*

“To people off alone, as we were, there is something stirring about finding evidences of human labour and care in the soil of an empty country. It comes to you as a sort of message, makes you feel differently about the ground you walk over every day.”

-Willa Cather, *The Professor’s House*

The conservationist laws and changing environmental practices being put into place while Eastman and Zitkala-Sa are writing have direct effects on Native American tribes/communities. In addition to the environmental policy that I discussed in my previous chapters, the combination of environmental law and Indian reform continues throughout the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1909, for instance, 700,000 acres of former tribal land in Washington, Idaho and Montana were opened to white settlers. 1915 brought the introduction of tourists’ automobiles to Yellowstone Park, initiating a new possibility for what we might understand as the beginning of eco-tourism in the sites set aside by Roosevelt as “national monuments.” These things certainly changed geographical maps and cultural outdoor practices (as well as the actual ecological condition of these lands), but Woodrow Wilson’s creation of the National Park Service in the Organic Act of 1916 participates most explicitly in the narrative I have been tracking in this chapter.11 The Act states as its central purpose:

The [National Park] service thus established shall *promote and regulate*

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11 The name of this Act is not particular to this moment nor is it to environmental law. Organic law, as defined in Black’s Law Dictionary is “a law that establishes an administrative agency or local government” and “The body of laws (as in a constitution) that define and establish a government.” The prototype for organic acts was the organization of the Northwest Territory by the Northwest Ordinance in 1787.
the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purposes of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. (emphasis mine)

The Act compiles the legal guidelines of earlier environmental laws by reiterating that certain land sites are “federal areas” – it repeatedly names the “national parks, monuments, and reservations” that were established throughout the previous decades. The Act defines the official purpose of the Service as one of “promot[ing] and regulat[ing] the use” of these zones of federal land. Such “use” should allow for “conservat[ion]” and “enjoyment,” both of which require that the land be left “unimpaired.” The Act exemplifies well how conservation law is based on Gifford Pinchot’s concept of proper use (“wise use”) and how this use is intended to both preserve and allow for human pleasure.

The tricky balance between the use of natural resources and keeping land “unimpaired” becomes evident as the Act continues: “He [Secretary of the Interior] may also, upon terms and conditions to be fixed by him, sell or dispose of timber in those cases where in his judgment the cutting of such timber is required in order to control the attacks of insects or diseases or otherwise conserve the scenery or the natural or historic objects in any such park, monument, or reservation. He may also provide in his discretion for the destruction of such animals and of such plant life as may be detrimental to the use of any of said parks, monuments, or reservations” (emphases mine). The law allows for the extinguishing of insect and animal pests as a means to both “control” and “conserve.”
Although it is an environmental law, this language of “attack” and “destruction” is reminiscent of the way Native Americans had been perceived in the national imaginary prior to Wounded Knee. While much of these national park lands did include tribal reservations, as I mentioned earlier, there is a disconnect in this Act between the actual presence of native inhabitants on these lands and their imagined disappearance from them. Within the framework of the Act, living Indians simply do not exist anywhere in these “federal areas” of “national parks, monuments, and reservations.” Their absence, both physically and rhetorically is partially a result of the earlier Dawes Act that dealt with American Indian communities who lived on these lands. The contradictory nature of The Organic Act – that is, its unresolved conflict between conservation and destruction – stems from its troubled equation between natives and insects. The conservationist use of a federally reserved natural site is a benefit to “future generations,” but it is at risk due to the threat of these pests. The Organic Act legalizes the federal destruction of natural pests, and allotment policy legislates the removal and/or reordering of Indians on certain lands (both proposed to be for the benefit of the nation), but the problematic presence and inextinguishability of the non-citizen Indian on U.S. land remains.

Eastman and Zitkala-Sa’s political and fictional writings put native voices into public circulation and their public performances and written texts become testament to the existence of indigenous peoples in this moment of their imagined disappearance/extinction. The political critique that emerges from their own use of the native/nature collapse resists essentialization. However, as the Organic Act of 1916 shows, a narrative of the natural native persists and continues to participate in a culture
that imagines indigenous inhabitants to be entirely (or just about entirely) absorbed into a natural world of the past. Willa Cather’s novel *The Professor’s House* (1925) exemplifies in fiction the complexities of this persistent narrative, particularly its contemporaneous strain of producing a simultaneously absent/present native. The novel offers a conflicted vision of the purpose of U.S. land and the place of indigenous peoples in its citizenry. Cather visited Mesa Verde National Park in 1915, the site that inspired the Antiquities Act. As a natural and archeological site, President Roosevelt had declared it a “national monument” a decade prior to her visit. Cather, one of the 663 people who toured Mesa Verde that season, stayed for a week in a tent camp, and she published an article in the Denver Times the following January (1916) about her experience in order to explain “what Mesa Verde means” (Kot 1). This article, in addition to the anti-speculation sentiments she expressed earlier in her 1901 story “El Dorado: A Kansas Recessional,” would become the seeds of the section entitled “Tom Outland’s Story” in *The Professor’s House*.

The Wetherill family, who owned the Alamo Ranch that bordered the cliff dwellings and who gave tours through the ruins, were some of the main constituents in the push to have Mesa Verde federally preserved, a mission that Paula Kot points out was both “patriotic and speculative” (3). Richard Wetherill was accredited with being the first white man to discover the Cliff Palace in Mesa Verde in 1888, and his perspective

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12 Kot’s references to Cather’s article are taken from Susan J. Rosowski and Bernice Slote’s “Willa Cather’s 1916 Mesa Verde Essay: The Genesis of *The Professor’s House*,” *Prairie Schooner* 58.4 (Winter 1984): 81-92.
becomes an element of Tom Outland’s fictional experience in Cather’s novel. The family had begun their tourism business a year earlier in 1887, but interest in the area peaked as a result of this find. Although the Wetherills advertised the ruins in 1895 as the “homes of an extinct race, the oldest and most wonderful ruins in America” (Kot 9), Al explains a troublesome element in his family’s first exploration of the cliffs that challenges this supposed extinction: “It is as though unseen eyes watched, wondering what aliens were invading their sanctuaries and why” (6). This sentiment expresses a kind of haunting. The human beings are declared “extinct,” yet there’s a sense of being watched by them. There is an explicit reversal of the direction of looking (who sees and who is being seen) that dramatically flips the position of citizen and “alien” Other. This sensation and the upsetting shift in subject/object that it creates gets at the kind of tension I notice in the Organic Act of 1916. These lands are perceived as abandoned (and preserved as such), but they also are strangely inhabited by beings that continue to make their presence known. In the legal rhetoric of the Organic Act, these beings are identified as animals and insects, and here they are Indians who once lived on that land – both are pesky ecological presences. Keller and Turek note that Mesa Verde tourists (whether they be there to examine the ruins, remove artifacts, or plunder a grave) and Richard Wetherill himself were stopped by some of the Ute inhabitants of the land surrounding the specific site who demanded a toll for entering Wiminuche land. The haunting sense

13 Keller and Turek note that “A Ute named Acowitz had told local rancher Richard Wetherill that ruins of the ‘ancient ones’ existed in Cliff Canyon but that Utes never went there because if spirits of the dead were disturbed, ‘then you die too’” (32).
of Indian presence in the physical remains/ruins and the actual bodily attempt on the part of living Ute inhabitants to make their presence known are deeply dissonant with the legal and cultural narratives of Indian removal and absence from these national lands. Living Indians become visible in a place they are imagined to no longer exist. The neatness of a romanticized vision of a land once inhabited by a primitive but now extinct people begins to unravel. The physical presence of living beings demands that they not only be seen but also that they participate in the capitalist system now based on this land. This physical reminder of their presence destabilizes white settler land claims as well as the environmental and Indian policies predicated upon Indian removal. Ownership over these land sites (even if owned federally rather than privately) cannot really be complete with these environmental reminders of former tenants.

*The Professor’s House* narrates a struggle that arises from this tension. The mystery behind places like Mesa Verde is that their stories are unclear and their native inhabitants seemingly inaccessible – Cather’s Tom Outland and his traveling buddies are forced to speculate (mentally and geographically) as to what could have happened to the indigenous peoples whose remains they find in Cliff City: “A people who had the hardihood to build there…must have been, as we often told each other, a fine people. But what had become of them? What catastrophe had overwhelmed them?” (191). Tom Outland’s story and the novel in which it is told seem to be a fictional exploration of not only “what Mesa Verde means” in particular, but more broadly, what reserved land sites like Mesa Verde and their indigenous inhabitants “mean” for the U.S. The novel
ultimately fictionalizes a correlation between national belonging and indigeneity that persists in its conflation of racial otherness and nature.

As the novel struggles with defining national identity through indigeneity, the conflict between conservation and destruction that I see articulated in the Organic Act comes to bear. The setting of Mesa Verde makes these conflicts even more significant. In this fictional world, Tom and Roddy enter Mesa Verde prior to its being named a “national monument” (and government property) by the Antiquities Act. In fact, their encounter is imagined as “an important discovery,” the first human contact since the indigenous peoples whose remains dwell there. At the heart of their fight over what should have been done with this discovery are questions of conservation and preservation that are happening in the world outside of the novel, and they are deeply intertwined with the way native peoples are defined as members of the nation.

Tom’s first description of Cliff City defines it as a piece of art: “I saw a little city of stone, asleep. It was as still as sculpture – and something like that… It was more like sculpture than anything else. I knew at once that I had come upon the city of some extinct civilization, hidden away…preserved…” (179-180). This wonder over the “preserved” beauty of the village quickly turns into the methodical labor and record-keeping of archaeological salvage – they immediately build a road to connect their cabin to Cliff City, begin “what [they] called excavating,” collect and number each “specimen,” and keep a daily “account” of their work. When Tom decides to journey to Washington D.C. to inform officials, he describes how they safeguard their findings: “We cleared up any litter we’d made in digging things out, stored all specimens, even the mummies, in
our cabin, and padlocked the doors and windows before we left it… I put my book in this niche and sealed it up with cement” (200). Tom’s investment in this land and the relics and human remains he collects from it, as he articulates later, is one of national pride: “They [“relics”] belonged to this country, to the State, and to all the people. They belonged to boys…that have no other ancestors to inherit from” (219). His attempts to salvage the remains and to define them as national treasure become problematic in a number of ways. The “potential for knowledge” that the Antiquities Act legislates is portrayed clearly here in the novel. When the tender wonder and awe he describes in imagining the civilization of people who built their homes in the mesa turns into the language of scientific salvage, words like “specimens” and “relics” stand in for both the human and domestic remains. Tom seems caught between an empathetic understanding of this land site and its people and the scientific quandary of preservation through acquisition. It is a struggle that hints at the exact thing Tom wants to avoid: “We were reluctant to expose those silent and beautiful places to vulgar curiosity” (183). His sentiment and words attempt to express a deep empathy, but his actions ultimately disrupt the very scene he is attempting to preserve.

This problem reflects the dual nature of the Antiquities Act. While the Act is a declaration of preservation, its third section also defines a certain use of lands as legally acceptable if “examinations, excavations, and gatherings are undertaken for the benefit of reputable museums, universities, colleges, or other recognized scientific or educational institutions, with a view to increasing the knowledge of such objects, and…shall be made for permanent preservation in public museums.” Tom Outland’s story is a fictionalized
version of this kind of “examination, excavation, and gathering,” but the conflicts that arise from it both explicitly and implicitly throughout the novel demonstrate the murky lines between the way land and indigeneity are mutually legislated. For instance, Father Duchene advises the boys to “go to Washington and make some report to the Government, so that the proper specialist would be sent to study the remains we had found” (199). He is very clear on the purpose of reporting their discovery: “You must go to the Director of the Smithsonian Institute… He will send us an archaeologist who will interpret all that is obscure to us. He will revive this civilization in a scholarly work. It may be that you will have thrown light on some important points in the history of your country” (199). This body of “public” knowledge ultimately does not come to fruition though. Tom’s fruitless attempt to interest government officials and his return to the mesa to find that Roddy has sold (to a foreigner) the very things he was trying to keep out of the market and preserve for an American public makes the failure of preservation tragic in the novel. The site has now been altered, its precious things sold and entered into a system that attaches definable economic value. This tragedy, on one hand, shows the danger of not preserving land and historical sites. In this sense, it implicitly demonstrates how important a law like the Antiquities Act is. On the other hand, though, it also shows how this problem lies in the very structure of the law itself. The novel dramatizes the battle between preserving and destroying, saving and dismantling.

This tension unfolds on native land (or at least land marked with the memory of indigenous life) and on the bodies of native peoples. The human remains of the indigenous villagers that Tom and Roddy uncover – three bodies in addition to Mother
Eve – like the “city” itself, are examined for clues and are packed and padlocked into the cabin for safekeeping with other “specimens.” Except for Mother Eve, the three “mummies” are sold along with the “whole outfit” to the German who bought “a lot of Indian things” (214). The land, people and objects that existed for unquantified centuries are gobbled up in one “transaction” (214). Significantly, though, Mother Eve, the female body they find on Eagle’s Nest (“one of the original inhabitants”), refuses to leave this land site (191). Her plummet into the canyon while being transported out of it means that she can never be removed along with the other “curios” and “relics.” Her permanent presence on this land and her simultaneous permanent absence on it (she is, after all, a corpse and lost at the bottom of a cliff never to be seen directly again) give a fictional account of the sense Al Wetherill articulates. And, like Wetherill’s eerie sense of unlocateable native eyes upon him in the caverns, Mother Eve, with her mouth shaped into a scream of resistance, will eternally inhabit those lands. Although tourists will not directly witness her body, voice, and pain, her history and presence on this site cannot be erased entirely, and so cannot be denied completely.

Mother Eve’s resistance (by way of her thousand foot plummet to the bottom of Black Canyon) demands that she be kept out of an economic system that buys and sells native peoples like commodities. Tom’s own distance from the scene and his vehement denunciation of it later also places him outside of this system: “…such a thing as selling them had never entered my head… I never thought of selling them because they weren’t mine to sell… There never was any question of money with me where this mesa and its people were concerned. They were something that had been preserved through the ages
by a miracle, and handed on to you and me…” (219, 220-221). Tom’s adamantly disapproval of the transaction and his disappointment with the federal government’s lack of investment makes him an outsider. As his names suggests, Tom is somewhere outside of both the men in D.C. and the men with whom he explores the mesa. Like the Blue Mesa and “its people” when he finds them, Tom’s ethics, values, and ultimately his physical self all exist outside of the social, cultural, and economic structure of the U.S. To the extent the novel dissociates Tom Outland from contemporary U.S. systems, it connects him with the environmental landscape of the mesa: “I wakened with the feeling that I had found everything… Up there alone, a close neighbor to the sun, I seemed to get the solar energy in some direct way” (227). Solar-powered like plant-life, Tom experiences an organic connection with the land by giving “all of me” and seeing the mesa “as a whole.” Seemingly an attempt to somehow rectify the wrongs of misappropriating the “trust,” Tom immerses himself in and becomes intertwined with the mesa. This organicism provides a personal remedy for the cultural violence that Tom has witnessed and rejected on some level: “I had my happiness unalloyed… I wakened with the feeling that I had found everything, instead of having lost everything. Nothing tired me” (227). The satisfaction that Tom feels as he connects with the land both primitivizes him and glorifies him. He becomes, as Walter Benn Michaels calls him, an “imaginary Indian” by way of this closeness with the land, taking the place of the indigenous peoples.

14 His outlying status from the economic system is made particularly clear in that his friendship with Roddy begins with circumstances surrounding a poker game and Tom convincing Roddy to “put every cent of it [his winnings] into a savings account” and ends with the disagreement over whether or not the “relics” should have been sold (164).
who once lived there (including the remains sold and lost down the canyon) (222).

Tom’s “story” and Tom himself, like Mother Eve, become “relics” of a people, time, and place that exist within the physical U.S. but outside of its body politic.

Tom has a profound effect on St. Peter from the moment he walks into the professor’s garden. St. Peter ultimately removes himself from communal familial and social life and relocates an earlier version of his self-identity. The earlier self – “that first nature” – that St. Peter uncovers is both native and deeply connected with nature (242):

“He was a primitive. He was only interested in earth and woods and water… He was earth and would return to earth” (241). Like the native bodies in the Blue Mesa and Tom Outland the “imaginary Indian,” St. Peter, too, is “confronted by accidental extinction” (258). The novel repeatedly draws these explicit connections among indigeneity, nature and death/extinction. The only real native peoples in the novel and on the mesa are dead, “mummified” and imagined to be of an ancient race, and the white men who play Indian take on isolation and personal extinction as they glorify their organic interconnections with nature. This act requires stepping out of the sociocultural, economic, and political community of a democratic state – it means suspending the role of citizen for a role seemingly stripped of the need for such a political identity. St. Peter marvels that he “couldn’t see Tom…becoming a public-spirited citizen” (236). Rather, Tom is a “glittering idea” (94) someone whose lack of political identity is made to look like an ideal and what St. Peter considers an “escap[e]” from the “conventional” (237).

Indigeneity in *The Professor’s House* is something to be conserved not through equitable legal and sociocultural statuses for living Indians, then, but through an ecological
symbiosis between non-indigenous peoples and these “organic” “national monuments” of lands. Once those pesky native presences, like the Organic Act’s animals and insects, have been relocated both geographically and in the cultural imagination, these federally-zoned sites offer the possibility of enacting an ecological organicness and a symbolic nativeness. This organic indigenous state is paradoxically romanticized as outside of political identity while also a role that is appropriated as truly American.

Americanness in this novel is produced through a destructive process of naturalization (to the point of annihilation) of the American Indian and through an ecological enactment of nativeness by non-native citizens. Michaels argues that the novel shows “the desire to keep Indian culture alive by killing the Indians off” (236). The Indian play in the novel is fueled by an environmentalist sentiment that proclaims an organic connectedness between non-native peoples and U.S. preserved lands as testament to a pure American spirit. This version ofAmericanness that relies on an idealized but extinct native culture emerges right when the Citizenship Act of 1924 is established. “Be it enacted,” it reads, “That all non-citizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States be, and they are hereby, declared to be citizens of the United States: Provided, That the granting of such citizenship shall not in any manner impair or otherwise affect the right of any Indian to tribal or other property." The language of this act maps out the actual transition that it constitutes. The move from “non-citizen Indians” into “citizens of the United States” is linked by “territorial limits.” The modifier “non-citizen” in the first part becomes the noun “citizen” in the second part. This shift in grammar mimics the actual transition in legal positioning of the American Indian – the
noun form, “citizen,” discursively acknowledges a formal and recognized subjectivity. The “territorial limits” mediate this change in subject position, indicating that citizenship continues to be associated with a land ethic in jurisprudential discourse.

Although the Citizenship Act declares full citizenship to American Indian peoples in real life, the relevancy of citizenship for natives is rendered useless in Cather’s novel. Native peoples are “dead and gone” and the white men who play Indian romanticize a primitivism and individualism that stand in for the politics of citizenship. Michaels argues that although federal acts in the first two decades of the century “encourage the normalization of the Indians’ status as citizens,” these acts, particularly the Citizenship Act of 1924, actually were “designed to keep people from becoming citizens… by declaring that they already were citizens. Both acts [he includes the Johnson Act]… participated in a recasting of American citizenship, transforming it from a condition that could be achieved through one’s own actions (immigrating, becoming ‘civilized,’ getting ‘naturalized’) to an identity that could be better understood as inherited” (222-223).

Certainly, *The Professor’s House* does insist on the significance of inheritance, particularly in Tom’s feeling of having inherited the mesa (and the metaphorical and economic “trust” over it) from ancient native ancestors. Tom’s actual familial identity as an orphan is absorbed in his organic relationship with the land and its memory of native inhabitants. Michaels’s sense that citizenship becomes a function of identity rather than actions, “of what you are rather than what you do,” changes a bit if you consider the process of ecological naturalization that Tom undergoes and the novel glorifies. Ecological symbiosis – his photosynthesis-like connection with the land – creates a
certain kind of “citizen” role based on an interdependence with the environmental world and its supposed lack of political narrative. This version of organic citizenship is based on “what you do,” but it is imagined to be based on “what you are.” American Indians are simultaneously and paradoxically both the original organic citizen whose past lives, identities, and memories are one with the earth, while they also are relegated to a role outside of this organic citizenship when pushed into extinction and replaced by non-native men like Tom Outland. Since there was a significant “discrepancy between the status envisioned for them… and the actual social status of the Indians,” legislation that declares their membership in the nation puts into legal and cultural discourse an understanding that this limited and liminal status is the ultimate role for Indian citizens (Michaels 222).

The paradox of organic citizenship in this moment, then, is that it functions as an ideal American role while also rendering the rights of membership in a body politic to be unnecessary, even useless. As the U.S. is simultaneously both legislating native citizenship and imagining Indians to be on the verge of racial extinction, indigeneity is removed from actual native peoples and becomes a conceptual identity that can be performed by non-native U.S. citizens through environmentalist practices. Democratic citizenship is replaced by an idealized human/land organicism that masks political violences and makes the federal granting of citizenship to all Indians less significant in practice. While land has everything to do with citizen identity, it is imagined to function outside of a citizenry and political systems. It is deeply problematic for native peoples whose newly legislated citizen membership in the nation is undermined.
While the establishment of the Citizenship Act of 1924 officially represents a legal landmark in native rights and a political victory for public figures like Eastman and Zitkala-Sa who worked towards the granting of full citizenship for American Indians, the deeply engrained concept of eco-indigeneity and its implications persist. By carefully infusing a contemporary eco-discourse with indigenous rights language, Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s writings put pressure on the process of “Americanization” embraced at the time, suggesting that the calls for an Americanized native are significantly more complex than one might have read them to be. Looking at their writings from this angle suggests to me that Eastman and Zitkala-Sa were articulating a certain eco-politics as a means for race analysis, and it indicates how these eco-politics were a critical element within what Gerald Vizenor explains as simulations of survivance, “heard and read stories that mediate and undermine the literature of dominance” (12). As Vizenor rhetorically asks, specifically of Eastman, “Could there have been a wiser resistance literature or simulation of survivance at the time?” Vizenor’s point is especially vibrant when considered together with Craig S. Womack’s argument that native writers in this period, like Eastman and Zitkala-Sa “were uncertain or hesitant about whether a Native voice, Native viewpoint, that narration of tribal life, or even a Native future was possible.” By revising the assimilative sentiment of their contemporary eco-discourse and positioning natives as rights-bearing and democracy-practicing citizens, these authors carve out a “Native future” within the cultural and legal framework of the U.S. The race analysis present within this would fall out of environmental politics and civil rights politics for decades, even through the critical moment of formalization for both sets of politics in the
mid-twentieth century. The link between these politics that Eastman and Zitkala-Sa note in the first couple of decades of the twentieth-century would not be articulated again until the 1980’s when environmental justice politics and activism emerge.

Zitkala-Sa wrote with conviction in 1922: “Catastrophe it was when both the big trees and the ancient race of red men fell under the ax of a nineteenth-century invasion. Could their every wound find tongue I am sure not only pebbles but mountains of stone would rise up in protest.” The power in this kind of statement pinpoints the activist potential that underlies a literary-political engagement with the connection between ecological and cultural devastation. It is a potential that Eastman’s and Zitkala-Sa’s writings hint at, and in doing so, allow them to “rise up in protest” within the political and literary constraints of their day.
Chapter 4
A Land Ethic and the “Right to Know”:
The Political Right of Nature and Citizens in the Stories of Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson

“We can all rejoice… in the fact that large numbers of citizens are now participating in conservation work. We shall doubtless see the day when conservation will be the way of life in America.”

“If there is a justification, from the public’s point of view, for a science of ecology, it is certainly its capacity to develop an understanding of the relations between man, other organisms, and their environment. If the public is asked to support ecological work – and it is, at the present, at least on a moderate scale – it must be granted the right to expect the best available advice on environmental questions.”

I. Introduction

In 1957, a small group of Long Island, New York, residents banded together to protest a mass aerial spraying of DDT scheduled to take place over their properties to eradicate gypsy moths.1 They formed the Committee Against Mass Poisoning and brought their case to court, arguing that their properties and possibly even their lives were being put in a position of irreparable harm.2 Murphy v. Butler moved from local jurisdiction all the way up to the Supreme Court and took three years to reach a final

1 In 1956, one million acres of forest in Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York had been sprayed, and in 1957, a plan was announced to spray an additional three million acres (MacGillivray 35).
2 They were led by ornithologist Robert Cushman Murphy.
prior to the Court’s final decision, though, their homes were sprayed with the pesticide dissolved in fuel oil. This fact, according to the Supreme Court’s decision, rendered moot their requested relief of an injunction both now and in the future: “…[T]he mere possibility that at some future date conduct similar to that engaged in by the defendants in the past may again be contemplated is not sufficient to prevent dismissal for mootness…Plaintiffs may not require the court to determine their legal rights under a set of circumstances which it appears probable will not arise again” (2). Additionally, the Court upheld the trial judge’s decision that “no legal rights of the plaintiffs had been violated and that the plaintiffs had not shown that they had suffered damage by reason of the spraying” (2). The courts ultimately concluded that bodies were not at risk in their current moment, nor would they be at risk in the future, and that the legal right to question the potential for physical harm had past.

Justice Douglas, still touted as the most environmental of Supreme Court justices, offered an emphatic dissent in 1960 based on his sense that “the issues involved in this case are of such great public importance” that the myriad of questions it raises should be addressed by the Court (1). While emphasizing that this spraying program is a type of “poisoning” of properties, humans, animals, and food products, Douglas expands this issue from a local scene to a broader one: “The public interest in this controversy is not confined to a community in New York. Respondents’ spraying program is aimed at millions of acres of land throughout the Eastern United States. Moreover, the use of DDT 3

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3 The case was originally called Murphy v. Benson. The change in name reflects the change in personnel in the U.S. Department of Agriculture during the time the case was pending.
in residential areas and on dairy farms is thought by many to present a serious threat to
human health as evidenced by the record in this case as well as alarms sounded by others
on the problem... [It] is of vital concern not only to wildlife conservationists and owners
of domestic animals but to all who drink milk or eat food from sprayed gardens” (2).
Justice Douglas refers consistently to local testimony, and he includes more than a page
of passages from Rachel Carson’s early writing on pesticides to bolster his position that
this matter is one of complexity and significant public relevance.

The knowledge sources from which Douglas draws, the language he uses to frame
his dissent, and the argument he constructs differ significantly from those of the Court.
When read together, the Court’s decision and Douglas’s opinion put forth vastly different
versions of jurisprudential engagement with environmental concerns during a second
pivotal moment in U.S. environmental legislation. The formulation of this case, its
movement up the ranks to the level of Supreme Court, and the arguments that emerge out
of it are all striking. *Murphy v. Butler* shows local citizens (specifically white, upper
middle class citizens) responding collaboratively and publicly to an environmental issue.
This chapter will look at the decades preceding this case— the same years that led up to
the formalization of the modern environmental movement – to track how this type of
collective local action emerges out of an environmentalist venue in this particular
moment.

The narratives that form around these kinds of concerns and civic action between
the 1930’s and 1960’s – in fiction, non-fiction, and legal text – use a discourse of rights
and democratic participation that launches environmentalist thought and language into
mainstream U.S. culture by the middle of the twentieth-century. The language being used to craft these stories borrows from a long-standing vocabulary of constitutional and democratic rights to achieve two things. First, it attempts to bring the natural into political membership. Investing the natural with political right shifts how the interactions between plant, animal and human communities are understood. Ultimately, politicizing nature promotes a change in the way cultural value can be assigned to ecological entities. Second, it extends environmentalist engagement beyond the specialized realms of scientists, plant ecologists, and political leaders to engage *regular citizens* in a critique of the scientific, federal, and cultural beliefs, practices, and policies that define who in a community should act and for what reason. Both of these outcomes show us how environmentalist thought continues to do more than articulate matters of conservation, preservation, or ecological change. In particular, the presence of a language of rights in environmentalist writing during this moment demonstrates how these eco-narratives also have direct effects on the status of the U.S. citizen.

In the previous chapter, I focused on the earlier political and fictional writings of Native American authors Charles Eastman and Zitkala-Sa to examine what I argue is a race critique within their use of environmentalist discourse. The fusing together of a language of rights and democracy with the familiar concept of a natural native allows their writings to critique the political membership (or the limitation and/or lack thereof) for indigenous peoples in the U.S. Eastman and Zitkala-Sa disrupted the assimilationist sentiment couched in eco-discourse by positioning natives as equitable, rights-bearing members and democratic participants in the U.S. nation. While the language and
concepts of rights and equity in this later moment might look and sound similar to these earlier literary attempts at social justice, they do different work. Although these debates continued to circle around each other, they did not converge into a literary-political engagement in Leopold’s and Carson’s writings as they had in Zitkala-Sa’s and Eastman’s. Rather, their environmentalist sentiment draws from a discourse of political right that normally would define human subjects as a means, instead, to politicize environmental issues and ecological entities.

This chapter will explore how Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) and Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) formulated an environmentalist ethic and helped put into motion the organization of modern environmentalism. The prose of both authors articulated a concept of democratic membership and galvanized political action around a set of environmental concerns that built upon similar discourses. Aldo Leopold extends the language of rights, traditionally applied to human national communities, to the natural world, politicizing nature and offering it agency as one among many “biotic citizens.” Rachel Carson later applies this language to human communities again, but she uses it to develop the idea of a citizen’s “right to know,” extending environmentalist knowledge and practice from the realm of expertise into the hands of regular citizen. However, these mid-century narratives ultimately navigate around direct race or class analyses, consequentially perpetuating a divide between two sets of politics – environmental and civil rights (particularly American Indian civil rights) – that, in many ways, continues to this day.
While Congress and American citizens were grappling with questions of constitutional and cultural rights, then, environmentalist writing and the politics that formed around it in this moment used a similar discourse, but it did so in a way that circumvented a sustained engagement with these concerns of race and class statuses. This separation is important to examine not only because native-authored writings had begun to set the stage for a convergence of environmental and civil rights activism throughout the preceding years, but also because the decades leading up to this moment of crystallization for the environmental movement were the same decades leading up to the organization of civil rights movements, making the absence of these particular elements of the critique even more poignant.

Examining the role of American Indians in the nation and the concept of indigeneity that was being legislated and re-legislated throughout this particular period shows us how these two realms of environmental and civil rights were tightly interwoven in concept and in practice. Two contemporaneous Indian reforms, the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and the House Concurrent Resolution 108 (1954) – although vastly different policies – continued to legislate native citizenship through land use practices and used a language of rights, self-governance, and cultural conservation to do so. The discourses in which these legal texts couch themselves and the position they relegate to the American Indian citizen indicates that the issues in which Zitkala-Sa and Eastman were immersed at the turn-of-the-century continued well after the Citizenship Act of 1924 had granted U.S. citizenship to natives, and that it persisted throughout these decades in which modern environmentalism was taking discursive shape. While the IRA
marked a period of federal support of Indian tribalism and the House Concurrent
Resolution did the opposite and marked the period of termination and relocation, their
overlaps show how native presence on U.S. land and American Indian’s role in the
national citizenry are relentlessly narrated and legislated over and over. Attending to the
presence of the American Indian in Leopold’s and Carson’s writings alongside these legal
documents and their implications highlights the problematic way in which
environmentalist thought repeatedly returns to the figure of the native and a symbolic
indigeneity in pivotal moments to help define its political environmental mission.

Finally, examining a critical change in the science of ecology in this particular
moment helps us to see how these two realms, although divided into separate politics,
were drawing upon similar concepts and vocabularies that also resonated in the
contemporaneous formulation of ecosystem theory. Again, the questions and concepts
that are popping up in environmentalist thought mirror some of the main ideas emerging
out of the discipline of ecology. They not only find common ground, as one might
anticipate, in scientific theory, but in the ways their ideas mutually draw from and
negotiate the dimensions of national membership and democratic participation.

With the economic crash of 1929 and the Great Depression came a tremendously
different scene for federal environmental management. Looking at this history in terms
of the drastic change in environmental conditions and the resulting policy-making
provides a necessary backdrop to understand how modern environmentalism emerged the
way it did in the middle of the twentieth-century. In addition to economic collapse in the
thirties, much of U.S. land was suffering the results of environmental disaster – years of
drought, dust storms, and floods devastated agricultural lands. The high temperatures, low rain, and stirring winds that created the Dust Bowl (centered in Kansas and Oklahoma) in 1931 moved desperate farmers to invest in new technologies – specifically, tractors – to try to get more out of the land.  

Julianne Lutz Newton notes that “[m]echanization put many farmlands and tenants out of work and homes. It was not simply dust storms after all but also what was underlying them – the machines, one-crop specialization, tenant insecurity, disease (particularly tuberculosis), and soil misuse – that evicted the residents of the Dust Bowl” (153). The combination of environmental devastation and loss of jobs prompted FDR’s administration to include a hefty amount of environmental reforms in their New Deal including agricultural stabilization policies, reforms in grazing and wildlife policies, river basin planning, multiple-purpose water resource development, public purchase of lands, and attempts at interagency coordination of federal conservation programs. In particular, beginning in 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps led by the Agricultural and Interior Departments gave jobs to unemployed men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five to work on conservation projects like planting trees, controlling insect and tree diseases, building trails, cleaning beaches and campgrounds, restoring historical sites, etc. Additionally, the Soil Conservation Service created a network of about 3,000 locally led “conservancy districts” that covered ninety-eight percent of farm acreage to try to rectify the effects of windstorms.

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4 The severity of these environmental conditions was acknowledged outside of this region when a storm in 1934 spread dirt over Chicago, Boston, New York, Washington, and Atlanta.
The end of the Civilian Conservation Corps came when men were drafted into World War II. Participation in World War II significantly changed environmental conditions in the U.S. The suburban boom produced a higher demand for materials and services – to build houses, roads, water, waste management, etc. – and the amount of logging in national forests increased dramatically. With the growth of the middle class family, car ownership, and leisure time came a new interest in outdoor recreation in the 1950’s and a greater demand that funds be allocated to the National Park Service to support this increase in the amounts of outdoor recreation and tourism. In 1955, a decade-long program called Mission 66 was established to focus on the construction and improvement of national parks and to upgrade the recreation sites around reservoirs. Rather than preserving the national parks for the sake of their natural beauty, they were marketed as “Parks for People,” and new campaign strategies focused on overnight accommodations, automobile usage, and visitor centers rather than “intrinsic natural values” (Andrews 192).

New products also were introduced into widespread use for the first time, including plastics, detergents, and organic chemical pesticides. To understand the widespread use of pesticides in particular, consider that although the amount of acres harvested declined by sixteen percent, the total production in agriculture increased by about forty-five percent due to a 168 percent increase in pesticide use between 1949 and 1968 (Andrews 188). This tremendous change in the way crops were harvested and the shifting social investment in land as recreational sites at the end of the 1940’s through the 1960’s provides a connection between the publication of Aldo Leopold’s and Rachel
Carson’s books. Although published over ten years apart, their environmental writings are bridged by significant land use changes in terms of public interest and practices, farming technologies, and dramatically altered crop production. This connection provides a context for reading these two books together beyond their being recognized as instrumental in the formulation of environmentalist thought.

II. Aldo Leopold: Constructing the Land Ethic

“[W]e may, without knowing it, be helping to write a new definition of what science is for.”

– Aldo Leopold, 1940

“Of what avail are forty freedoms without a blank spot on the map?”

- Aldo Leopold, 1949

“A thing is right,” Aldo Leopold writes, “when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” Leopold succinctly proposes that people think about land in relation to their sense of “right” and “wrong.” Leopold’s “land ethic” continues to be a philosophical cornerstone of environmental ethics, and his development of it in the 1930’s marks an important shift in the way nature and citizenship are mutually conceptualized. Aldo Leopold donned many caps. He was a forester, educator, author, fisherman, hunter, and he is considered by many to be the father of wildlife management and the U.S.’s wilderness system. After getting a masters in forestry at Yale, Leopold worked for the U.S. Forest Service for
nineteen years, and then in 1933 was appointed Professor of Games Management and Agricultural Economics at the University of Wisconsin.\(^5\) Leopold was one of eight who formed the Wilderness Society in 1935 which continues to draw significantly upon Leopold’s ideas and writings in its mission statement today: “We are advocates for the land.\(^6\) At the heart of the work we do is the land ethic, which defines a set of principles in how humans should relate to the land. [Here they include Leopold’s quote above, ‘A thing is right…’].”\(^7\) This sustained interest in Leopold several decades later indicates how although Leopold is not a figure or writer well known outside of environmentalist circles today, his work – both on and off the written page – had tremendous impact on the shape of modern environmentalism. The ideas that the contemporary Wilderness Society still draws upon to define themselves – a land ethic and a biotic community – are two of Leopold’s complex theories that were necessary in defining modern environmental thought and in implementing practical actions for wilderness preservation.

Leopold’s abundant written work is concerned with resource management and the conservation of wildlife and wilderness areas, but it also is deeply interested in the role citizens play – both ecologically and politically – in rethinking environmental use. A main concept driving Leopold’s writings was the idea that conservation could not be solely a federal practice – environmental problems could not be addressed appropriately

\(\text{\footnotesize 5} \text{ The university created this department and appointed Leopold as its first chair soon after he published Game Management (1935) which outlined techniques for managing and restoring wildlife populations.}\
\(\text{\footnotesize 6} \text{ I will discuss the emergence of and legal debates surrounding this idea of human beings advocating for the political rights of land/nature/ecological entities in the following chapter. Such a clear articulation of this idea isn’t common in Leopold’s time, but would become so in the 1960’s.}\
\(\text{\footnotesize 7} \text{ See http://www.wilderness.org/AboutUs/what.cfm?TopLevel=What for full mission statement.}\

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without “creating a new kind of people” (qtd. Newton 170). That is, the role of the citizen in conservation practices was vital for him, a sentiment he expressed in the late 1940’s when he stated that conservation’s “basic defect… [was that] it had not asked the citizen to assume any real responsibility” (Newton 259). In addition to redefining the purpose of U.S. land and the policies of conservation, his writings attempt to bring to life this “new kind of people” who can understand the importance of wilderness areas and become actively engaged in their conservation as a result.

On one hand, this tactic is similar to the social thinkers and workers during the Progressive Era who had drawn heavily upon a rhetoric of “the people” to emphasize social responsibility at the conception of conservationism, as I discussed in Chapter One. But, Leopold’s writing a few decades later demonstrates a different set of complexities in which this vocabulary is embedded. While citizenship had not been secured for all U.S. inhabitants during the Progressive Era, Leopold is writing at a time when citizenship rights have been extended to include the racial and ethnic others who did not have such legal status decades earlier. I argued earlier that the language of democratic practice at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century aided in imagining the assimilation of ethnic and racial others as a natural process. It helped make a place for non-citizen inhabitants in the national collective without necessarily extending citizenship rights to them. During Leopold’s period, leading up to the publication of *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949, the composition of U.S. citizenry had changed, and what was about to be called into question publicly and legally, instead, were the persistent problems of equity in terms of the way
this legal standing played out.\textsuperscript{8} The heart of the matter remained the same – which is the reason this kind of vocabulary resurfaces and finds currency across decades – but Leopold’s writings entered the scene when there were new sets of concerns about national membership in which a language of rights could have resonated with a familiar, yet revitalized, ring to it. While critical of modernity, Leopold relies on a modernist political vocabulary. It offers Leopold a powerful vehicle for suggesting that ecological entities have relevance beyond solely economic value.

Leopold turns to prose, and in particular, a language of democratic rights to fuel this concept of a revitalized U.S. people whose participation is critical to environmental conservation. His Forward (written in 1947) opens with the assertion: “There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. These essays are the delights and dilemmas of one who cannot… For us of the minority… the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech” (emphasis mine, xvii). Leopold immediately and explicitly draws upon constitutional right. He calls attention to a group of conservation-minded citizens and centers them within a broader citizenry – as a “minority” group – who narrates certain stories.\textsuperscript{9} Leopold’s opening suggests that

\textsuperscript{8} Perhaps the most widely-known is Brown v. Board of Education which began in 1951 and was decided in 1954.

\textsuperscript{9} Paul S. Sutter notes that Leopold “argue(s) for wilderness as a minority right” and that this “theme of minority rights would remain a central part of wilderness advocacy in the decades to come” (205-208). The term “minority” was gaining currency in the mid-forties and was defined formatively in 1945 by sociologist Louis Wirth (See “The Problem of Minority Groups” in The Science of Man in the World Crisis). Leopold’s use of it here – “we of the minority” – attempts to name conservation-minded Americans who are invested in their “inalienable” “right” to experience interactions with nature. The presence of this term here is interesting in two ways. It brings a word primarily being used to understand racial and ethnic communities into the service of an environmentalist argument, and it anticipates the way this term would gain momentum in the civil rights movements to follow.
environmental practice and, implicitly, the narratives alongside it are constitutionally-defined rights, “inalienable as free speech.” The problem, he concludes, is the limited way that the relationship between “land and people” is understood: “We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect… That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten” (xviii-xix). Leopold articulates a meeting of an environmentalist sensibility, democratic community, and ethics. These are old ideas (“long known”), he seems to be saying, but they have not been brought together to “make shift” in the way land is understood and the way citizen engagement with conservation is practiced (xviii). Leopold argues that a new kind of ethics be constructed/recognized around a particular kind of minority. Roderick Nash positions Aldo Leopold’s work in the center of a broad pivotal moment of expanded national membership that made it possible to revise the value of “nature”:

In the century after the Revolution, American ethics underwent significant expansion. The abolition of slavery in 1865 was the most dramatic instance. In subsequent years the rights of women, Indians, laborers, and free blacks received attention. One of the most radical frontiers of ethical expansion was the human relationship to that other component of the state of nature: nature itself. When ecology helped Americans think of other species and the biophysical world as an oppressed and exploited minority within the extended moral community, the contemporary environmental movement received its most characteristic insignia. Old-style conservation, plugged into American liberalism, became the new environmentalism. Leopold’s land ethic was one of its philosophical cornerstones because it conceived of the protection of nature in moral, not just traditional economic, terms. (“Intellectual Heritage” 65)
Nash marks the connection being made between the political position of marginalized groups and that of U.S. land, suggesting that the extension of rights to these human populations becomes the foundation for an extension of those rights (and, implicitly, protections) to ecological entities.

Leopold’s call for a “shift in values” is not an isolated conservationist argument (xix); rather, as H. Lewis Ulman notes, it is an emphatic “cultural criticism” (61). His critique highlights an extensive web of cultural practices, scientific research, and federal policy that are deficient in fully conceptualizing and enacting conservationism. This shift is possible, Leopold believes, if Americans embrace what he calls “the land ethic” that ultimately fuses environmental concern and practice into democratic practice. Leopold began to shape his concept of a land ethic in 1939 in his talk, “A Biotic View of Land,” presented (and published shortly after) at a combined meeting of the Ecological Society of America and the Society of American Foresters.10 This essay became a foundational piece for “The Ecological Conscience,” published in 1947, and for “The Land Ethic,” published in A Sand County Almanac in 1949.11 Leopold ultimately defines the land ethic in Sand County as: “All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts… The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land” (239). This idea of a community comprised of linked entities emerged in a different form just a few years earlier. South African ecologist John

Phillips, basing his points on ecologist Jan Christian Smuts, argued before the International Botanical Congress, Cambridge in 1930 “that groups, societies, nations and Nature are organic without being organisms, are holistic without being wholes… A biotic community in many respects behaves as a complex organism – in its origin, growth, development, common response, common reaction, and its reproduction. In accordance with the holistic concept of Smuts (1926), the biotic community is more than the mere sum of the parts; it possesses a special identity…” (qtd. Golley 12). Leopold draws from this vocabulary and concept of a biotic community, but he goes even further than arguing for a “special identity” of this community. For Leopold, this ecological union – one that includes human beings – is reason for an environmental ethic. This type of community necessarily redefines the role of humans: “a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it” (240).

Leopold’s idea of a land ethic extends citizenship beyond its recognized political dimension, and into an ecological land-based role as well. Since citizenship is more than a political position, the community in which the citizenry thrives becomes more than a political entity as well. He is calling attention to the United States as not only a symbolic nation, but as a land-space as well. At the same time, he is making the ecological, the land – its members and interactions – political.

Leopold trains his readers to see themselves as regular citizens of a “land-community” in two ways. First, he uses the same language to name non-human subjects. A mouse becomes “a sober citizen,” birds have “biotic right,” and trees are to varying degrees “created free and equal” (4, 247,73). Defining animals and plants as citizens
lends them the agency and rights normally attributed, generally, to human beings, and to
national U.S. subjects in particular. Second, Leopold conflates a patriotic language of
national membership with this vision of an expanded citizenry: “[D]o we not already sing
our love for and obligation to the land of the free and the home of the brave? Yes, but just
what and whom do we love? Certainly not the soil… not the waters… not the plants…
not the animals… A land ethic of course cannot prevent the alteration, management, and
use of these ‘resources,’ but it does affirm their right to continued existence, and, at least
in spots, their continued existence in a natural state” (emphases mine 240). Like human
national citizens, animals and plant-life have rights. This vision both politicizes the
“natural” as members of “the land of the free” and it ecologizes the “home of the brave,”
making human citizens into ecological beings as well.

Conceptualizing the U.S. as both a nation and a landscape and its inhabitants as
interconnected members of them is entrenched in a longer line of thought, as I discuss
extensively in my earlier chapters. The United States has defined itself territorially from
its conception, and narratives that express Americanness show a long-standing conflation
of the two. Leopold’s attention to what he calls a “moral” component in environmentalist
thought also is not an entirely new tactic. Gifford Pinchot, Theodore Roosevelt, and W
J McGee had used a similar rhetoric, as Nash notes, “but only in speaking of equal human
rights to resources – the familiar democratic rationale for Progressive conservation” (76).

12 This idea of a “moral” component to environmentalist thought and practice has entered into mainstream
attention most recently in the documentary An Inconvenient Truth (2006) in which Al Gore repeatedly
states that environmentalism is “a moral issue.”
J. Howard Moore had argued in his 1906 book *The Universal Kinship* that “[a]ll beings have not equal rights, but *all have rights*,” including animals but not plants (qtd. Nash, “Intellectual Heritage” 71). These earlier figures anticipate the latent potential of an idea of ethics in environmental practice decades before Leopold, and they do so through a language of democracy and rights. But Leopold’s writing gives it fuller form making it a prominent and driving force around which modern environmentalism would soon after organize. Nash argues that “The Darwinian evolutionists and the old-style humanitarians had occasionally glimpsed the idea of a morality that extended beyond human society, but Leopold, with the aid of ecology, gave it its most dramatic articulation at least up to the late 1940’s” (“Intellectual Heritage” 81). Although Leopold’s land ethic was not seized upon by a popular or mainstream culture in the time Leopold argued for it, the way he defines this ethic through citizenship and democracy retains a critical place in the way modern environmentalist thought would emerge. Leopold’s use of the literary form and his investment in the practice of storytelling play a vital role in thinking of conservation through moral terms and in articulating an environmentalist ethic.

The composition of *A Sand County Almanac* reflects the significance Leopold placed on stories. The book includes a collection of stories that arose out of living on his family farm and restoring “The Shack,” what Leopold called his “shack sketches.”13 This part is arranged seasonally and moves from January through December, creating a

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13 In 1935, Leopold and his family began an ecological restoration project on a farm they called “The Shack” that sat beside the Wisconsin River. The Leopolds restored prairie lands and planted thousands of pine trees, throughout which Leopold carefully documented the resulting changes in the flora.
literary “almanac.” The section that follows the almanac is comprised of essays on conservation and essays on the “philosophical questions” that emerge when “we dissenters rationalize our dissent” (xviii). Leopold articulates his arguments through what he names “ecological stories” and uses them as the building blocks for the critical essays that follow. In one of the most powerful stories in the almanac, “Good Oak” (the February chapter), Leopold describes the chopping of a lightning-struck tree. He tells his reader about the chopping event itself, and also narrates the human, animal, and plant histories that lie in each of the good oak’s rings. This tree, the “dead veteran,” dates back to “1865, at the end of the Civil War” when he imagines that the “emigrant traffic” of “pioneers” moving to the northwest must have carried an acorn along with them that took root (9, 7). Each chop through a ring of the tree opens up a new decade in U.S. history and a collection of ecological fluctuations, federal policies, and cultural changes throughout that time. “We sensed that these two piles of sawdust were something more than wood,” Leopold relates, “that they were the integrated transect of a century; that our saw was biting its way, stroke by stroke, decade by decade, into the chronology of a lifetime, written in cocentric annual rings of good oak” (10). The tree becomes the bearer of multiple stories – its rings the pages on which these narratives have been recorded – and Leopold’s telling of these stories as he chops is a specific kind of literacy and narration.

14 I will discuss extensively the connection between migrations, seeds and stories in my final chapter, specifically in my discussion of Ruth Ozeki’s novel All Over Creation (2003).
He expands upon this association between human literacy and a wilderness narrative when he defines conservationist action as a writing practice in his November chapter: “I have read many definitions of what is a conservationist, and written not a few myself, but I suspect that the best one is written not with a pen, but with an axe. It is a matter of what a man thinks about while chopping, or while deciding what to chop. A conservationist is one who is humbly aware that with each stroke he is writing his signature on the face of his land. Signatures of course differ, whether written with axe or pen, and this is as it should be” (73). Leopold suggests that there are deliberate ways to write upon land and to read its histories. It is this narrative exchange between land and its user that redefines the resourcefulness of nature, providing land with a tangible value beyond economics.15

Leopold emphasized the importance of this kind of storytelling exchange to his students16 in 1946 when he said, “I am trying to teach you that this alphabet of ‘natural objects’ spells out a story…Once you learn to read the land, I have no fear of what you will do to it, or with it” (qtd. Meine 29). Ultimately, he connects a land-narrative and literacy with the cultural shift he is trying to initiate—learning to see ecological entities as participants in a narrative and learning to read this story become the key elements in

15 This quote also models how Aldo Leopold’s arguments are not about a purely nature-for-nature’s sake sentiment. He is not proposing that the chopping cease, rather that it be a conscientious action. His ideas of wilderness are based on a careful use particular to his moment and role in the Forest Service. As Sutter notes, “…Leopold was interested in seeing forests used for recreation…[His] earliest wilderness proposals were fundamentally about saving landscapes from the popularity of the automobile, outdoor recreation, and the improvements that accompany both” (205-208).

16 In 1933, Leopold accepted a position as Chair of the brand new Department of Game Management at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
changing what is done “to” and “with” the land. What emerges out of this narrative exchange, then, is the potential for activist engagement. Leopold articulates his sense that localized citizen action is necessary in reshaping environmental conditions, philosophies, and practices when he analyzes the “defenders of wilderness.” After discussing the Wilderness Society (which he helped organize in 1935) and the Sierra Club, he argues that more must be done: “It does not suffice, however, to have a few such societies, nor can one be content that Congress has extended a bill aimed at wilderness protection. Unless there be wilderness-minded men scattered through all the conservation bureaus, the societies may never learn of new invasions until the time for action has passed. Furthermore, a militant minority of wilderness-minded citizens must be on watch throughout the nation and vigilantly available for action” (279). Leopold emphasizes the role of citizens in wilderness protection by equating it with a warlike militancy and a prompt readiness to act. Environmentalist practice at the level of the local citizen is a critical component in what he frames as a potential kind of war against ecological “invasions,” and citizen action is a way to guard and protect the nation. Leopold’s idea of national security and his emphasis on the citizen’s role in protecting the nation from foreign “invasions” turn a sentiment of democratic communal action into one of exclusion which makes sense in this Cold War moment, as I will discuss below.

When we examine how Leopold’s concept of narrative and his use of a language of democracy and rights come together, implications of violence, invasion, and cultural destruction come to the surface. These kinds of references hint at a tension that I sense between environmentalist narrative being a site for rights discourse in this moment while,
at the same time, lacking a sustained engagement with the questions and arguments about citizens and rights that would emerge out of the civil rights movements to follow. In an essay about the growth of a weed called cheat grass, Leopold calls it a “new ingredient of the melting pot” (165). He explicitly draws upon a nationalist language that had been used to define ethnic and racial convergence in the U.S. for decades in order to position plant-life as constituents in the nation/land community. His metaphor works precisely because it readily would have been recognized by his readers as lodged in this national (and human) history. He expands upon this metaphor later in his essay when he uses a series of terms to describe the destructive capacity of cheat as it inhabits the land: it “invades,” “degrades,” “chokes out,” and “threatens older reproduction with… danger” (167). This vocabulary is the same kind that was used at the turn-of-the-century to describe the nativist fear of the increased influx and presence of immigrants in the United States. Leopold’s use of it here, along with his reference to the cultural “melting pot,” draws from this concept, but as an attempt to instruct his readers to understand ecological changes as equally important as cultural changes. Although his intended lesson might be to emphasize a positive shift in perception, there are less positive consequences of using this kind of vocabulary. The problem with connecting this idea with such a language is that it ends up, at best, directly avoiding a critique of these assimilationist concepts, or at worst, passively affirming the old idea that it draws upon – that racial and ethnic others are an invasive species, a weed-like threat to the United States. This is particularly true when we contextualize these potential consequences within Cold War notions of national security.
In different places, though, Leopold calls attention to marginalized peoples as a means to decry the damage done to both land and humankind, and it is the closest he comes to working out the complex connections between the two: “We [forest officers] spoke harshly of the Spaniards who, in their zeal for gold and converts, had needlessly extinguished the native Indians. It did not occur to us that we, too, were the captains of an invasion too sure of its own righteousness” (emphases mine 145). His equation of the treatment of natives with the treatment of animals and lands hints at a recognition that there is an actual connection between these cultural and ecological violences, a connection that the writings of Charles Eastman and Zitkala-Sa had highlighted earlier. Similar to his references to slavery, though, Leopold draws upon these things with a strange sense of romanticism, as if they are events lodged entirely in the past, rather than indicating a sense that those violences are being played out in his current moment. The danger of this romanticized representation is made clearer when Leopold warns, “We shall never achieve harmony with land any more than we shall achieve absolute justice or liberty for people. In these higher aspirations the important thing is not to achieve, but to strive” (210). This explicit reference to social justice indicates that there are overlaps in environmentalist thought and civil rights thought, and that there is a potential for a joint activist response, but his writing does not put pressure on these links. Instead, it vaguely suggests that there is a way we can see these politics in line, but only in terms of a romantic hopefulness and attempt to rectify these inequities, a “striv[ing]” that will never

17 He is speaking specifically of the capture of “Old Bigfoot,” the last grizzly bear who lived on Escudilla mountain in Arizona.
come to fruition. While this brief reference to “justice and liberty for people” might have helped to frame the understanding of environmentalist practice within a broader picture of social causes, the full power behind this potential critique is flattened out by Leopold’s lack of rigorous engagement with the ways these politics connect. The reference to “native Indians” is a useful tactic in symbolizing inequity. The native becomes, again, a literary figure against which a different politics can be shaped.

The same years Aldo Leopold was working in forestry and writing and presenting papers on his conservation ethic, the definition of an ecological community was changing in the studies of plant ecology. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Eugenius Warming and Henry Chandler Cowles had put the term and study of ecology into practice in the U.S. in the 1890’s, and they emphasized the existence of a “plant society” with “origins and life histories.”\(^\text{18}\) Frederick Clements extended their work in 1916 when he named plant communities “superorganisms.”\(^\text{19}\) By 1920, British botanist A.G. Tansley began to rework these initial concepts, and his most significant piece, “The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts and Terms,” was published in *Ecology* in 1935. Tansley’s essay reframed the understanding of ecological interaction, shifting attention from organisms to systems:

> It is the systems so formed which, from the point of view of the ecologists, are the basic units of nature on the face of the earth. Our natural human prejudices force us to consider the organisms (in the sense of the biologist) as the most important parts of these systems, but certainly the inorganic ‘factors’ are


\(^{19}\) See *Plant Physiology and Ecology*, 1907.
also parts – there would be no systems without them, and there is constant interchange of the most various kinds within each system, not only between the organisms but between the organic and the inorganic. These ecosystems, as we may call them, are of the most various kinds and sizes. (299)

Tansley’s “ecosystem” theory recognized the ways “isolated” entities, both organic and inorganic, “overlap, interlock and interact with one another” (300). All of these interactions, he argued, are mediated by “organization, which is the inevitable result of the interactions and mutual adjustment of their components” (300). Zoologist Raymond L. Lindeman expanded upon Tansley’s ecosystem concept in his essay “The Trophic-Dynamic Aspect of Ecology,” published posthumously in Ecology in 1942. Supporting and extending Tansley’s findings, Lindeman focused on food-cycle relationships and developed a concept of systemic energy flow.

Aldo Leopold’s prose and this scientific ecosystem theory emerging in this same moment draw upon a similar set of vocabulary, and while they use it to different ends, it is a language that aids both of them in presenting ideas of cooperativeness. We can see this convergence particularly in the development of Leopold’s “land ethic,” an idea that he began to articulate as early as 1933 and used regularly by 1934. Leopold builds his “land ethic” on a convergence of social and ecological theories. He begins to lay out this convergence by offering a double definition of an ethic: “An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence. An ethic, philosophically, is a differentiation of social form and anti-social conduct. These are two definitions of one thing. The thing has its origin in the tendency of interdependent individuals or groups to evolve modes of co-operation” (238). The vocabulary of “co-operation” and
“interdependen[cy]” works in both realms to describe an ecological interconnectedness between entities and a social interconnectedness between human beings.

Leopold emphasizes this shared “origin” of interdependent parts to argue that the sense of social responsibility for human beings be extended to an active enactment of care for “the land” as well. Remember his encompassing definition: “All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts… The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land” (239). Leopold’s first essay on a conservationist ethic in 1933 had anticipated the shift from the earlier scientific understanding of plant society formation into ecosystem theory. This explicit articulation of the land ethic in 1949 exemplifies how the basic tenets of ecosystem theory were being written out in different forms and were finding political currency in venues beyond the scientific community. Both highlight system interconnectedness, but the driving purpose behind Leopold’s prose, geared specifically to non-expert readers, takes on a political dimension with which Tansley’s (and Lindeman’s) writings would not have engaged deliberately.

In Leopold’s “ecological stories,” the scientific language of ecology and conservation meet the philosophical and political questions of citizen practice. “The land is one organism,” he explains, “its parts, like our own parts, compete with each other and co-operate with each other. The competitions are as much a part of the inner workings as the co-operations. You can regulate them – cautiously – but not to abolish them” (190). Understanding the land as an organism is a concept embedded in earlier studies of
ecology. Tansley questioned the term organism, arguing that it implied an isolated entity rather than systems of “highly integrated wholes” (297). Leopold uses the term “organism,” but his conceptualization of it reads as somewhat similar to an ecosystem in that his organism is one comprised of integrations between plant, animal, and human communities. That is, his is a larger series of connected “parts” rather than an isolated entity. Leopold brings this scientific concept of ecological competition and cooperation into the service of imagining a nation and its constituents. He merges his vision of “the land,” a geographical site, with a national collective, producing what he names “the organism called America” (291). This type of concept circulated within a particular nationalist discourse in this moment. In some ways similar to the turn-of-the-century concerns about immigrant and American Indian presence in the United States, the Cold War moment in which Leopold’s work was published in its entirety was concerned with foreign presence in the nation.

Leopold’s vision of the “organism called America” could have registered for both non-expert and expert readers within this particular moment of nationalist sentiment, when envisioning the United States as a unified system became a necessary cultural, jurisprudential, and political way to imagine national security. In fact, the legislation that initiated Cold War policy, the National Security Act of 1947, drew upon a similar kind of concept of separate but interconnected parts. The Act defined its main purpose as a means “to provide a comprehensive program for the future security of the United States; to provide for the establishment of integrated policies and procedures for the departments, agencies, and functions of the Government relating to the national security.”
It relies upon a language and policy of “integration,” and it makes repeated references to the “organization” of separate agencies being “unified” under one “direction, authority and control.” We can see how the concepts of ecosystem, environmental ethics, and national security are drawing from a shared pool of terminology. Leopold’s writing taps into this vocabulary seemingly for different means – to imagine a “biotic citizenship” that extends beyond humans and to encourage regular citizens to rethink their position and ethical obligations in an ecological community: “The only true development in American recreational resources is the development of the perceptive faculty in Americans… Let no man jump to the conclusion that [he] must take his Ph.D. in ecology before he can ‘see’ his country” (291). Leopold’s cultural critique hinges on the idea of a joint citizenship in an ecological land and a nation, as I discussed earlier, but rather than promoting cultural assimilation as this kind of ecologized citizenship did at the turn of the century, he imagines that this joint citizenship is the origin for an environmental ethics that moves citizens to action. Again, we see how Leopold’s concepts border the lines between encouraging modes of citizen engagement or even activist resistance, on one hand, and failing to analyze extensively the nuanced political implications of his own participation in broader concepts of national belonging, on the other hand.

Leopold’s sense of a joint citizenship finds company in contemporaneous Indian reform policies that legislated a kind of dual citizenship for indigenous peoples. Similar to Leopold’s idea that Americans were citizens of both an ecological system (the land) and a nation, these Indian reforms negotiated the citizenship status of natives around their
dual affiliation in the U.S. nation, tribal nations, and the land sites attached to those nations. It is not surprising that Leopold would discuss natives in his writings, not only because of the long-standing connection between Indians and nature in American thought, but because their role as citizens of the U.S. is undergoing significant legal change once again in this period. As we saw above, Leopold uses the “extinguish[ing]” of American Indians as a reference point to admonish the unnecessary destruction of animals or land in his contemporary moment, but he does not engage in any sort of sustained critique of the treatment of natives, particularly in terms of the way the United States enacted this violence. Native peoples do have a deliberately defined role in Leopold’s construction of environmental ethics though. He marks a clear distinction between “primitive peoples,” (specifically mentioning “the plains Indians”) and “civilized peoples,” suggesting that indigenous peoples based their “culture” on “wildlife” while “civilized peoples” must strive to “retai[n] part of its wild roots” (211). He uses a similar line of thought in “The Land Ethic” when he writes “[t]hus soil-oak-deer-Indian is a chain that has now been largely converted to “soil-corn-cow-farmer” (252). These depictions of natives position them in a primitive and pre-modern past, and mark an alteration in the food-chain that pushes the Indian out of existence as land use practice and resource management changed into agriculture. However, in order to retain a sense of “wild roots,” a necessary element in establishing a value in land beyond economics since “the shallow-minded man…has lost his rootage in the land,” Leopold calls upon this image of primitive natives and their connection to “wildlife” (279). He relies upon a long-standing tradition of turning to the idealized primitive native and the
brave pioneer upon whom “a distinctively American tradition” is based as models for understanding that “the raw wilderness gives definition and meaning to the human enterprise” (279). The glorified connection between native peoples and “wildlife” comes to serve Leopold not in expressing a political interest in native peoples, but in defining his land ethic. Using these models of the native and pioneer becomes a way to define the enactment of conservationist work and its role in the broader process of “building citizens” (208). This aspect of his writing hints at the way notions of indigenous identity and the romanticized Indian-pioneer confrontation continued to be underlying elements upon which a sense of Americanness and models of democratic practice could be built, even within environmentalist thought.

Leopold’s brief but significant mention of American Indians reflects the ongoing national interest in native presence in the United States. Indian citizenship continued to be questioned and legislated explicitly around land use between 1934 and 1953, years that bookend Leopold’s writings and bridge his work with Carson’s. “The Problem of Indian Administration,” known as the Meriam Report, was published in 1928, after the U.S. Secretary of the Interior sent out a team (led by Lewis Meriam) to investigate the conditions of Indian communities. The Meriam Report documented widespread economic poverty, ill health, poor living conditions, poor education, etc. – significant problems to which Aldo Leopold’s later use of Indians never alludes. “An overwhelming majority of the Indians are poor, even extremely poor,” the report begins, “and they are not adjusted to the economic and social system of the dominant white civilization.” While a couple of decades earlier this lack of “adjust[ment]” would have been interpreted
as the diminishing of the race, the Meriam Report came to a different conclusion. The findings of the report and its suggestions for policy change drew attention to the difficulties of these “adjust[ments]” to a “dominant” set of “system[s]” and its consequences, and it attempted to galvanize support for policy change:

…[T]he nation has at present the opportunity, if it will, to write the closing chapters in the history of the treatment of the Indians by the government of the United States. To really patriotic citizens who love and admire their country and who like to view with pride its achievements, it would be something of an atonement and a worthwhile accomplishment if these closing chapters should disclose the national government giving to the Indians the highest quality of expert service to make them capable and efficient citizens of the nation, able to take care of themselves, and to contribute to the nation from the best of their own original American culture.

This is an issue in which “patriotic citizens” – implicitly non-Indian citizens – should be invested, the report claims, as it affords “the nation” a chance to rectify its wrongs and ultimately strengthen itself. If Indians are made to be “capable and efficient citizens,” then their “original American culture” will benefit the broader nation. Indian citizenship, when reshaped into something “efficient” comes to serve as the remedy to the troublesome narratives of Indian treatment in “American history.” Even while the report’s findings focus on the necessity of reform as a way to improve life for Indians, it carefully and consistently circles back to a broader wellbeing of non-Indian citizens and the nation. Who and what are at risk here shifts from native peoples and native communities to non-native citizens and the nation encompassing those communities. Fashioning a “capable and efficient” American Indian citizen ends up being about non-native citizenship.
When FDR appointed John Collier to the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1933 (until 1945), the Meriam Report’s suggestions to eliminate allotment and phase out Indian boarding schools were put into effect. Collier had been a social worker in New York, where working with immigrant communities peaked his concern for the decline of traditional cultures. Collier’s “Indian New Deal” redirected Indian policy in the U.S. Two tremendous changes were made in its central piece, the Indian Reorganization Act (the Howard-Wheeler Act), which was passed in 1934. The IRA terminated the Dawes Act, prohibiting the further allotment of Indian lands, and restoring any “surplus” lands that remained from allotment into reservations. It also allowed for Indians living on reservations to establish local self-government and tribal corporations. Like the Dawes Act of 1887, the Indian Reorganization Act focuses on the legislation of both land use and Indian peoples, but there is a significant difference in the position of Indians at this later moment; while the Dawes Act makes citizenship available to non-citizen Indians through privatized land use, the IRA is put into place after the Citizenship Act of 1924 extended citizenship to all Indians, regardless of their relationship with allotted lands. Although this change in the legal-standing of the Indian subject calls for an engagement with different issues, the IRA continues to draw upon similar grounding concepts of national membership and land.

The IRA opens by defining itself as: “An Act to conserve and develop Indian lands and resources; to extend to Indians the right to form business and other organizations; to establish a credit system for Indians; to grant certain rights of home rule to Indians; to provide for vocational education for Indians; and for other purposes”
(emphases mine). It immediately links its Indian policy goals with an environmentalist sentiment – the mission of the reform is presented as an act of conservation and development of land and resources. In addition, the language of rights that is beginning to find new currency in literary and political venues at this moment plays a prominent role here as well. Together, this language and the explicit connection to the conservation of resources formulate a new version of Indian-citizen rights. The Dawes Act had been invested in natives who “adopted the habits of civilized life,” declaring them “citizen[s] of the United States, and…entitled to all the rights, privileges, and immunities of such citizens….” But the IRA begins to proclaim a dual position of Indian citizenship and a set of rights based not on “adopt[ing] the habits of civilized life,” but on adopting tribal constitutions: “Any Indian tribe, or tribes, residing on the same reservation, shall have the right to organize for its common welfare, and may adopt an appropriate constitution and bylaws.” While both are built on a land-based citizenship, there is a distinctive move in the IRA into a concept and language of a multi-dimensional citizenship. Sustaining dual citizen positions and roles is framed as a form of “conservation” that benefits the broader nation, the U.S., which incorporates and ultimately legislates this citizenship.

After vigorous assimilationist sentiment and policy, the transition into a federal policy of tribal governance and reservation-reformation may seem odd. The presence of environmentalist language and restrictions in the IRA helps us to understand how this worked on the level of federal policy and in the mind of the national citizenry. The Act is explicit about the way certain natural resources will be managed: “The Secretary of the Interior is directed to make rules and regulations for the operation and management of
Indian forestry units on the principle of sustained-yield management, to restrict the number of livestock grazed on Indian range units to the estimated carrying capacity of such ranges, and to promulgate such other rules and regulations as may be necessary to protect the range from deterioration, to prevent soil erosion, to assure full utilization of the range, and like purposes.” This means, essentially, that federal jurisdiction extends to forests in Indian-land in order to regulate logging practices.\textsuperscript{20} The convergence of Indian policy and environmental policy here pinpoints an element of the complex relationship between separate tribal lands and broader U.S. lands. While the IRA is putting sovereign constitutionality into place, it also undercuts this sovereignty by mediating the relationship between tribes and their lands. The IRA indicates how the lands designated as outside of the “public domain” and within the “geographic boundaries of any Indian reservation” are organized carefully to be both sovereign and federally managed spaces, a doubleness that is mirrored in its tribally constituted and U.S. constituted \textit{citizens} as well.

Conservationist language and actual conservationist practice – both of which highlight the “resource[fulness]” of Indian lands and native cultures for the United States – mediate the organization of these separate, but united, governments and citizens. Like Tansley’s ecosystem theory that would surface two years later, there is a sense here that communities do not function solely as what Tansley would call “isolates,” but that there

\textsuperscript{20} Richard N.L. Andrews explains sustainable-yield theory as a “technical double-speak” that “blurred the implications” of its consequences: “The public image of sustained yield forestry was that a tree was planted for each one logged, thus in principle assuring a continuous supply into the indefinite future. To the Forest Service and the timber industry, however, sustained yield management meant not just replanting, but also harvesting the \textit{maximum} biological potential of each acre…. [T]his meant dramatically increasing logging on [national forest] lands… [and] applying to the public lands the industrial practice of clear-cut logging, or harvesting the entire biomass of an area rather than merely the dead or mature trees” (194).
is constant system interaction between them, an interaction that ultimately is regulated by the U.S. Although these lands and peoples might be designated as sovereign, the presence of environmentalist language and policy in this piece of legislation suggests that they remain organized and united by the broader nation in which these interactions take place.

Although Aldo Leopold’s work as a forester and his prose were not invested in Indian reform, there is an important overlap in the way both Leopold and the IRA formulate their ideas of citizenship. A foundational point within Leopold’s land ethic is that human beings are dual citizens – they are members of both a “land community” and a body politic. Much of his argument stems from this concept of being a citizen in both a natural interconnected system and in a political nation. While the IRA is concerned with Indian status in the U.S. (and not explicitly with environmental issues), it also expresses a concept of dual citizenship – natives are both members of the tribal community and the U.S. Although these two versions of a multi-dimensional citizenship originate from different sets of politics, they share an encompassing investment in the roles citizens play as members of the nation. And in order to define these roles, both Leopold’s environmentalist argument and the IRA’s Indian reform explicitly and carefully define land/environment and ecological entities in relation to political membership in a collective. They swap imagery in the process – Leopold draws upon the primitive native in the U.S. and the IRA draws upon natural resources and conservation. The points of connection that bring together the broader concerns of the land ethic and Indian “reorganization” in this moment demonstrate the persistence and rhetorical usefulness of
merging the ideas of environmental conservation and Indian reform. Not only does this connection aid in giving shape to separate political missions and/or legalities, but it also allows these politics to participate in the broader matters of nationhood, Americanism and citizenship. These overlapping realms participate in creating “a new kind of people,” whether it be a “defender of wilderness” or a more “efficient” Indian citizen, and they draw from a shared language of democracy and constitutional right. Rachel Carson would enter this conversation and use similar language to argue that citizens have a “right to know,” putting environmentalist practice squarely into the hands of local citizens and communities.
III. “The Skillful Use of Words”: Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* and the Right to Know\(^{21}\)

“Who wants to read a book about pesticides?”

-Paul Brooks, Rachel Carson’s editor

“The story of how these chemicals are used and misused will be told…”


From its start, Rachel Carson’s professional life brought together scientific studies and the literary form. After receiving her master’s degree in zoology from Johns Hopkins in 1932 (as one of only three women in her class), Carson began her work in the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries. She turned to writing as a means for income when the Depression made it difficult for her to pay tuition costs, writing radio scripts for a public education series on marine life called “Romance Under the Waters” produced by the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries. The immediate critical response to her first book *Under the Sea-Wind* (1941) demonstrates the recognition of the duality of her work – the *New York Times* critic stated, for instance, that the book was “so skillfully written as to read like fiction, but in fact a scientifically accurate account of life in the ocean and along the ocean shore” (qtd. Lear 104). This synthesis of “fiction” and “scientific accuracy” would become the trademark of her writing throughout her following books, *The Sea*...

Around Us (1951) and The Edge of the Sea (1955), and in her most politically influential book Silent Spring (1962).

Carson’s interest in pesticides began much earlier than the publication of Silent Spring, and the local politics that led up to its publication are significant in understanding how the narrative works. Carson took an interest in environmental toxins as early as 1938, when she wanted to write an article on naturally occurring arsenics, and she began to question the ecological effects of chemical pesticides prior to 1945, as indicated by her attempt to interest Reader’s Digest in an article on DDT. Her worries and research on synthetic pesticides were brought into sharper focus in 1957 when controversy erupted around the Long Island case. As I described briefly in the opening to this chapter, in the spring and summer of 1957, the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and state agencies had covered New England, New York, and Pennsylvania with DDT mixed in fuel oil to eradicate gypsy moths, tent caterpillars, and mosquitoes. Citizen protest began to mount, yet state and federal agencies planned on expanding the spraying campaign the following year. Beatrice Trum Hunter, an organic gardener and naturalist who lived in New Hampshire, was one of the most vocal in her protest, and the Boston Herald published a letter written by her that urged citizens to resist the spraying, which she called “mass poisoning,” particularly because of the harm it could do to wildlife and human beings (Lear 314). Hunter’s letter sparked significant response, including dismissals of Hunter and the Committee Against Mass Poisoning as “hysterical.” But, it also inspired Olga Owens Huckins, a writer and former editor of the Boston Post, to express a similar perspective. Huckins owned a bird sanctuary in Massachusetts that had
been sprayed repeatedly in the summer of 1957, resulting in the death of many songbirds and the contamination of their nesting places and ponds. Already friendly with Carson, Huckins wrote to her about the aerial spraying, calling it “inhuman, undemocratic, and probably unconstitutional” (qtd. Lear 314). She also wrote a letter to the *Herald* outlining the damage done to the songbirds, the reappearance of super mosquitoes, and the disappearance of bees, grasshoppers, and other insects, ultimately calling for the definitive halt to “the spraying of poisons from the air everywhere” until conclusive long-term research could be done to determine the effects on wildlife and human beings (Lear 315).

This regional debate fueled Carson’s interest in the issue, and she moved into full gear to research the effects of such pesticides on public health. Uncovering reports of contaminated cow milk from sprayed pastures and reproductive failures in birds that had ingested poisoned insects, Carson began to present the issue as one not only pertinent to animal or plant life, but as one ultimately relevant to “human welfare.” She suggested writing an article on the issue for the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, and, in a letter to E.B. White, a respected author and columnist for the *New Yorker*, she urged, “[T]ake up your pen against this nonsense – though that is far too mild a word! There is an enormous

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22 There is a really interesting way in which this language of unconstitutionality is emerging out of environmental debate in our current moment again. I will discuss this when I turn to the recent opinion issued on April 2, 2007 in *Massachusetts et al. v. Environmental Protection Agency et. al.* which decided that the Environmental Protection Agency’s failure to regulate CO2 as a health risk was unlawful.

23 Carson begins her Acknowledgments at the start of the book with her thanks to Huckins: “In a letter written in January 1958, Olga Owens Huckins told me of her own bitter experience of a small world made lifeless, and so brought my attention sharply back to a problem with which I had long been concerned. I then realized I must write this book” (xiii).

24 Carson quotes E. B. White in one of her two epigraphs (the other one is by Keats) to *Silent Spring.*
body of fact waiting to support anyone who will speak out to the public…” (Lear 317). Carson’s adamant call to White indicates that she considered “taking up [one’s] pen” a means of engagement with the issue – the literary form becomes a way to reach “the public.” The localized interest in pesticide use and this regionalized editorial debate demonstrate how vital were the roles of the citizen and literary production in initiating resistance to federal and state mismanagement of natural resources and in altering environmental conditions. The role of the citizen is a necessary element in Carson’s process of “taking up [her] pen” to write Silent Spring and in the formulation of environmentalist engagement that she puts forth in the book. Carson gave the first indication that her next project would focus on synthetic pesticides in 1959 when the Washington Post published her response to their editorial comment on the National Audubon Society’s report about how an unusually harsh winter had affected the migrating birds in the South. In “Vanishing Americans,” Carson focused on the role of insecticides and herbicides in the “silencing of the birds” (qtd. Lear 346).25 The letter anticipated the language and arguments of Silent Spring, and the response to it indicated the potential for a receptive public audience for the larger project that would not come to fruition for three more years.

25 “Vanishing Americans” appeared as an editorial in the Washington Post on March 30, 1959, and it was published as an article on April 10, 1959. The phrase used for the title, “Vanishing Americans,” explicitly connects the language being used to frame this eco-issue with the language used to describe native peoples in the U.S. decades earlier. American Indians were imagined to be “vanishing” at the turn of the century, and the rhetorical connection here is a remarkable example of the way native peoples and natural beings continue to be conflated and that the political subjectivity of American Indians remains at play in these discourses even if implicitly.
In the meantime, the “Great Cranberry Scandal” of 1959 stirred up a widespread skepticism and fear in the public regarding the effects of chemical use in food production. The U.S.D.A. had registered Aminotriazole for non-food use in 1956, and in 1958 had approved of its use on cranberry bogs after the berries had been harvested. When many cranberry growers applied it prior to harvest, the plants absorbed the herbicide and contaminated many of the berries. The FDA had not established the tolerance level for the chemical, and as a result, a third of the 1957 crop from the Pacific northwest was withheld from the market. The 1958 crop was grown, processed, and marketed while toxicity studies were underway, ultimately establishing that Aminotriazole, having caused cancer in laboratory rats, was a carcinogen. The FDA began to check the spraying practices of cranberry growers and although the National Cranberry Association attempted to withhold from shipment any berries that had been in contact with the herbicide, the pre-Thanksgiving demand for cranberries led them to ship the lots out anyway. When the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), Arthur S. Flemming, announced in a press conference on November 8, 1959, that he recommended no sales of cranberries or cranberry products until the industry established a plan for testing, separating and destroying contaminated berries, grocery stores took the cranberries off their shelves and sales ceased entirely.

The public was shocked by this toxic contamination of food products, and fear increased when it was learned that the herbicide also was registered for use on cornfields, in apple and pear orchards, and on roadside weeds. The Great Cranberry Scandal exposed tremendous flaws in the USDA’s pesticide registration process and its testing.
process – broadly, it raised public questions about its procedures for ensuring consumer safety from toxicity.\textsuperscript{26} Carson attended the public hearing on the FDA’s ban (ten days following Flemming’s announcement), and she wrote the following day, “The cranberry crisis has, I believe, been a wonderful thing in opening up the problem for a public that has been blissfully unaware that food carries anything in the way of contamination” (qtd. Lear 360). The scare did help produce a public that would be receptive to Carson’s message in \textit{Silent Spring}, and it marks the beginning of a critical shift in the way environmentalist concerns and thought took shape in this moment – from conservationist investment in natural resource and a nationalist interest in wilderness and park areas into a body-centered public health concern.\textsuperscript{27}

The \textit{New Yorker} serialized \textit{Silent Spring} in its “Reporter at Large” section in June of 1962, three months prior to the publication of the book in its entirety. The two-part installment led to immediate response from readers, and the magazine was inundated with the most letters it ever had received. \textit{Silent Spring} finally was released on September 27, 1962, and it made it to the bestseller list within two weeks of its

\textsuperscript{26}The Thalidomide Scandal emerged around the same time as the Great Cranberry Scandal as well. Thalidomide was an anti-nausea drug prescribed globally to pregnant women for morning sickness and for use as a sleep aid between 1957 and 1961. After a few years of such use, it was uncovered that inadequate research had been conducted to test the safety of the drug. 10,000 children were born with severe deformities (including the congenital disorder phocomelia) as a result of its use. The U.S. enacted drug-testing legislation as a result of this tragedy, and thalidomide was not prescribed for decades.

\textsuperscript{27}While public health concerns certainly were a significant element of the politics surrounding immigration at the turn of the century, and even a part of an urban environmentalism like Jane Addams promoted (as I discuss in Chapter One), the shift that I am noting here moves these concerns into mainstream environmental attention. It is important to note that the organization of environmentalism (and the specific priorities of environmental groups) change in correlation with the bodies at risk. The who, what, where, and how are extremely pertinent to the way these environmental matters emerge. In this particular case, the pervasiveness of the problem – that contaminated cranberries could be consumed by anyone – easily peaked interest in environmental matters for a broader population.
publication and number one on the list by November (it remained on the list for six months). It immediately was chosen as the October selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club, the president of which urged members to read it because it exposed a poison as relevant to human life as nuclear warfare. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas also wrote a report to club members to encourage their reading of the book. He previously had provided a review comment on the book for Houghton Mifflin in which he called *Silent Spring* “the most revolutionary book since *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*… This book is the most important chronicle of this century for the human race. The book is a call for immediate action and for effective control of all merchants of poison” (qtd. Lear 419). At the same time, President John F. Kennedy, in a regular press conference, famously responded to a new question about the growing concerns over DDT by referring to “Miss Carson’s book” as the particular catalyst for scientific studies on the effects of its use. The day following Kennedy’s mention of the book, the National Agricultural Chemicals Association (NACA) issued a pro-pesticide propaganda booklet titled “Fact and Fancy” to try to counter the mounting skepticism over pesticide use. This kind of political drama marked the time leading up to and immediately following the publication of *Silent Spring*, and it brought into conflict local citizen interest, federal response, and industry. The book itself is a relatively complex scientific narrative that

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28 Malcolm Gladwell, in his 2001 *New Yorker* article “The Mosquito Killer,” marks a distinction between their two points of view, exemplifying how complex this matter of pesticide use is. He writes: “Carson effectively lumped the malaria warriors with those who used DDT for economic gain. Nowhere in *Silent Spring* did Carson acknowledge that the chemical she was excoriating as a menace had, in two previous decades, been used by malariologists to save somewhere in the vicinity of ten million lives. Nor did she make it clear how judiciously the public-health community was using the chemical.”
describes in detail things like the chemical composition of pesticides and the physiological effects on life-forms. That such a narrative could bring about this kind of sensational response and link multiple arenas of political, regional and industrial interests demands more attention, particularly from a literary critical perspective.

Carson acknowledges the way her writing crosses genre boundaries in her National Book Award acceptance speech for *The Sea Around Us* in 1952: “Many people have commented with surprise on the fact that a work of science should have a large popular sale. But this notion that ‘science’ is something that belongs in a separate compartment of its own, apart from everyday life, is one that I should like to challenge… The aim of science is to discover and illuminate truth. And that, I take it, is the aim of literature, whether biography or history or fiction. It seems to me, then, that there can be no separate literature of science.”

Carson’s sense that science and literature belong together, that they share a similar mission, offers a definition for the literary form that *Silent Spring* would take ten years later.

Carson provides a short note at the beginning of *Silent Spring* explaining, so as not to “burden the text with footnotes,” she has contained her source information in an appendix at the back of the book, carefully arranged by chapter and page for reference. Such a stylistic choice is the first indication that her book will be a different kind of scientific narrative. This is confirmed with the first chapter titled “A Fable for Tomorrow” and the opening words of the book, “There was once a town in the heart of

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29 For text of speech, see http://www.nationalbook.org/nbaacceptspeech_rcarson.html.
America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings” (1). This tale of a Mayberry-like town begins, as fairy tales do, with the introduction to an ideal place – in this particular version, the town is abundant with “prosperous farms,” verdant fields and orchards, hearty animal and wildlife, and healthy human inhabitants. It is a town both optimally functional and aesthetically pleasing, until “a strange blight creeps over the area and everything began to change” (2). The “community” – plant, animal, and human – becomes inflicted with this “shadow of death” which brings illnesses that baffle farmers and doctors. The town becomes an infertile and abandoned zone in which birds no longer thrive (“they trembled violently and could not fly”), chicks no longer hatch, piglets live only a few days, trees no longer produce pollen or fruit, and streams are no longer inhabited by fish. It becomes a “silent” place “deserted by all living things” (3). Upon the roofs of houses sits evidence of “a white granular powder” that had fallen over homes and streams weeks earlier (3). This is the final image of the chapter before the text breaks and the narrator’s voice tells us “This town does not actually exist, but it might easily have a thousand counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world” (3). Although this is an imagined town, each of these problems has happened in “real communities,” which leads Carson to frame the issue for the book: “A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know. What has already silenced the voices of spring in countless towns in America? This book is an attempt to explain” (3).

This apocalyptic narrative both eases and shocks the reader into the experience of reading the book in its entirety. The language of the “fable” and the literary experience
of being navigated around an American landscape are familiar and this familiarity provides a certain a kind of legibility that readers, particularly readers who live in such rural and suburban neighborhoods, would have understood. The narrative also explodes feelings of comfort found in this legible language and pastoral landscape; the creeping “blight” or “specter” that wreaks havoc on the town, sterilizing its fertile abundance and silencing its life, violently disrupts the normalcy of a town in America’s heartland by infusing it with infertility and death. The familiar pattern of a fable or fairy tale created by this range of imagery from pastoral to gruesome allows Carson to launch into her lesson with readers well engaged.

“A Fable for Tomorrow” pushes the boundaries of literary form and content to an extent by concluding a “once upon a time” kind of story with misery and death rather than pleasant resolutions. As M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer argue, “The implication is that the old, simple ways of seeing and acting no longer work; that a new reality requires a new kind of narrative” (“Millenial” 30). This opening story of the book mimics in literary form the problem that Carson is attempting to highlight—the things that Americans know and understand and the communities in which they live, thrive, and find comfort, could be altered dramatically in potentially devastating ways.30 Although there is a great discomfort embedded in this news and in the reader’s

30 I am interested in how a strikingly similar kind of narrative is working in our current moment, for instance, in the very recent ABC News World News Tonight report, “Going Green,” which advertised the significance of its story under the banner “Are we ruining our home?” This turn to the language of “home” and its impending destruction mirrors Carson’s narrative, but it also contains new resonances with a home-centered vocabulary that I see emerging out of the contemporary “War on Terror” public discourse (i.e., homeland, home-grown terrorists).
experience of witnessing the fictionalized struggle to live in such an unhealthy landscape, the book captured the fixed attention of a remarkably broad readership. Critics have noted the way Carson mixes genres in her writing and how she uses the literary form as a vehicle to transport her scientific research to a public, non-specialized audience. Attending more closely to the type of language Carson uses throughout her book can help us see what made this turn to the literary so politically effective in this moment.

Killingsworth and Palmer’s initial reading of *Silent Spring* (particularly the opening fable) as an apocalyptic narrative provides a starting point for a critical engagement with the way this kind of book could have garnered such broad attention: “To employ apocalyptic rhetoric is to imply the need for radical change, to mark oneself as an outsider in a progressive culture, to risk alienation, and to urge others out into the open air of political rebellion” (“Millenial” 41). In their more recent reading of the book, they argue that “not only the opening chapter, ‘A Fable for Tomorrow,’ but *Silent Spring* as a whole has narrative thrust… [W]ithin every chapter, numerous stories unfold to fill out and extend the general outline of the myth developed in ‘A Fable’” (“Science Fiction” 176). I want to push both of these arguments further by suggesting that the call for “political rebellion” in *Silent Spring* emerges not only from an apocalyptic rhetoric or from the storytelling shape that the narrative takes, but that it emerges out of the way these things are brought together by a vocabulary of rights and the concepts of citizen action that rely upon such language.

“A Fable for Tomorrow” models in fictional form the kind of action that *Silent Spring* in its entirety attempts to put forth. The “answer” that the narrator says the book
will provide in the following chapters becomes multi-dimensional in that it is not solely an explanation of what has happened to the “town in the heart of America” – that is, not just a scientific explanation of what the “white, granular powder” is – but it also includes an inextricable and direct call for citizen participation in questioning the structures/institutions that produced this problem. Unlike the terms of strict scientific study, this “answer” that the book provides, is one that promotes questioning, critique, and political engagement.

The fable is only a short two pages, but it hints at this complexity of the “answer.” While the reader is guided through a town that, the narrator tells us repeatedly, has been silenced, the sound we do hear comes from specific speakers: “The farmers spoke of much illness among their families” and “Many people spoke of them [the “strange stillness” created by a lack of birds]” (2). Although “it was a spring without voices,” Carson explicitly offers the voices of farmers and inhabitants – unnamed, regular people who work and live in this withering town. They speak from within this silence. It is not only the story form that is effective here, but also this turn to regular people who witness change up close in the intimate space of their homes/homelands and have something to say about it. From the start of the book, then, Carson teaches her reader to tune into those particular voices and the stories they have to tell. This investment in the local citizen arises consistently throughout the following chapters, articulated primarily through rights language, and it is the foundation for the book’s call to arms.

As the book shifts out of the “Fable” into Chapter Two, “The Obligation to Endure,” Carson immediately moves into a discussion of “man’s assaults upon the
environment,” specifically highlighting the human-made chemical Strontium 90 before delving into pesticides. Her explanation of the dangers of this chemical anticipates the way she will later describe the dangers of pesticides: “Strontium 90, released through nuclear explosions into the air, comes to earth in rain or drifts down as fallout, lodges in soil, enters into the grass or corn or wheat grown there, and in time takes up its abode in the bones of a human being, there to remain until his death” (6). Ralph H. Lutts points out that Carson’s naming of this pollutant first is quite deliberate: “Well known to the American public, Strontium 90 was a tool to help her explain the properties of pesticides” (34). Indeed, as studies began to show the pervasiveness of radioactive chemicals in living organisms31 and as public awareness of this matter began to grow, Carson’s initial turn to this matter in her book immediately situates her argument in a familiar concern. Lutts explains, “People around the nation knew that invisible radioactive material was in the air they breathed and lodged within their own and their children’s bones. In learning about this hazard they also learned about the ecological food chain, the biological concentration of these materials, and the cancer and other radiation-induced effects that might strike them in future years” (26). An initial, brief mention of Strontium 90 immediately taps into the public’s budding fears of the potential for physiological damage from radioactive fallout, allowing Carson to shift from imagining what Lawrence Buell calls “doomsday by bomb and holocaust” to “doomsday by environmental genocide” (295).  

Within two pages Carson pushes this potential for physical harm significantly further and traces the lines of the book’s main points. First, she implies that it is not only the body at risk, but the genealogy of the family as well: “…substances that accumulate in the tissues of plants and animals and even penetrate the germ cells to shatter or alter the very material of heredity upon which the shape of the future depends” (8). In stating that these pollutants put “heredity” and “the future” at tremendous risk, that “gene mutations” are possible, the text implies that the reproduction of the family line is at risk, able to be “shatter[ed]” or “alter[ed]” (8).32 This fear of “penetrat[ion]” and its negative consequences, although presented in a scientific context here, resonate outside of this realm, certainly exhibiting contact points with Cold War politics and the nationalist/cultural thought surrounding these politics. Remember, for instance, that the National Security Act of 1947 (which initiated Cold War policy) made its primary concern “to provide a comprehensive program for the future security of the United States.” In both contexts (and texts), there is a concern over how the future will, or even can, happen; as well as how these invasions, whether physiological (i.e., chemicals entering the body directly or indirectly via the food chain) or national/military (i.e., foreign presences entering a national body) can lead to, well, “mutations” in this imagined and questionable future. Carson explicitly uses this connection to galvanize interest and action when she rhetorically questions: “We are rightly appalled by the

32 She emphasizes this point again, using the same kind of language, later in the book: “For mankind as a whole, a possession infinitely more valuable than individual life is our genetic heritage, our link with past and future. Shaped through long eons of evolution, our genes not only make us what we are, but hold in their minute beings the future – be it one of promise or threat” (208).
genetic effects of radiation; how then, can we be indifferent to the same effect in chemicals that we disseminate widely in our environment?” (37).

Ecocritic Cheryll Glotfelty focuses on this connection between *Silent Spring* and Cold War rhetoric, a connection that works along the same lines as a correlation already being made between propaganda for anti-Communist sentiments and pest control products. Glotfelty argues that “…Carson succeeded in finding just the right rhetorical formula to galvanize American citizens. By working within the Cold War paradigm of her day, substituting the pesticide industry for the Communist bloc as the purveyor of impending doom, Carson was able to tap into a powerful source of public energy and emotion” (167). Both “…create a climate of crisis in order to justify their demand for drastic action” (166). All true, I believe, but there is something more to the way it works that becomes clear when we look at how the text turns emphatically to political right in the following pages.

To problematize the questionable future, Carson turns directly to the national past and a rights-defining document – The Bill of Rights:

It is not my contention that chemical pesticides must never be used. I do contend that we have put poisonous and biologically potent chemicals indiscriminately into the hands of persons largely or wholly ignorant of their potentials for harm. We have subjected enormous numbers of people to contact with these poisons, without their consent and often without their knowledge. If

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33 One of her most interesting illustrations and readings in this regard: “…[A]n insect army march[es] across a map of the United States. The situations looks terribly grim until a spray can appears from the sky to kill the hostile invaders dead in their tracks and keep the world safe for democracy… Such advertisements equated pest control with national defense and made the spray can a symbol of patriotism” (160). Carson references a similar image: “The Agriculture Department sponsored a propaganda movie (to gain support for its program) in which horror scene’s were built around the fire ant’s sting” (164).
the Bill of Rights contains no guarantee that a citizen shall be secure against lethal poisons distributed either by private individuals or by public officials, it is surely only because our forefathers, despite their considerable wisdom and foresight, could conceive of no such problem.

I contend, furthermore, that we have allowed these chemicals to be used with little or no advance investigation of their effect on soil, water, wildlife, and man himself. Future generations are unlikely to condone our lack of prudent concern for the integrity of the natural world that supports all life. (12-13)

Carson promotes the citizen’s right to protect one’s body from the “harm” of “lethal poisons” by exposing its absence in the Bill of Rights. Surely, she suggests, this would have been a constituted right had “our forefathers” been living witness when this issue came into laboratory-manufactured existence. This passage moves matters of science squarely into the realm of the political, making the matter of pesticides something viable not only within the scientific community, but one that is imperative to a politically defined and constituted body on the broadest level, and, on a more specific level, to the citizen of that body. Also, her use of the Bill of Rights in this way positions Silent Spring as an articulation of the parts missing from the constitutional text. In the next and final paragraph of this crucial chapter, Carson gives a name to the new right she is narrating in Silent Spring:

This is an era of specialists… It is also the era dominated by industry… When the public protests, confronted with some obvious evidence of damaging results of pesticide applications, it is fed little tranquilizing pills of half truth. We urgently need an end to these false assurances, to the sugar coating of unpalatable facts. It is the public that is being asked to assume the risks that the insect controllers calculate. The public must decide whether it wishes to continue on the present road, and it can do so only when in full possession of the facts. In the words of Jean Rostand, “The obligation to endure gives us the right to know.” (13)
By the close of the short introductory chapters (one fiction and one non-fiction), Carson has laid out the book’s demand that “the public” rather than scientific experts or industry leaders “decide.” Since it is the one to bear the weight of the lived consequences of pesticide use (not just the researched, on-the-page ones) – that is, the one who is put at risk – the public is the one, she argues, who must make the decision to change these practices. The book that follows is a way to put this public “in full possession of the facts” so that such a decision can be made. The legislated right missing from the Bill of Rights, the one that *Silent Spring* attempts to narrate, is what she names “the right to know.” Drawing upon French biologist and philosopher, Jean Rostand, Carson put this term into circulation in the U.S. and popularized it as an eco-citizen right. Decades later in the 1980’s, Citizen’s Right to Know environmental organizations and movements would put this concept into formalized political practice.

While critics have noted the text’s activist elements to a certain extent, others have noted its apocalyptic narrative, others its connection to Cold War politics, and still others the role fiction plays in this non-fiction scientific book, it seems to me that the way this book works as an amendment narrative provides a link among these things. *Silent Spring*’s formulation of an environmentalist “right to know” inserts a right into political discourse and citizen practice about which official framing constitutional texts did not speak. It provides the book with a foundation to enter into scientific discourse in the following two hundred and eighty pages, inviting along readers of “the public” even through such a dense narrative. That is, before it can motivate regular people to act in a political venue, the book gets people to read (and to read multiple narratives). Literacy,
specifically the consumption of an eco-narrative, becomes the catalyst for political engagement, social action, and environmental change. “A Fable for Tomorrow” – its fictive form and apocalyptic tone – certainly provides a hook for sparking interest in this kind of reading, as I discussed above. But the assertive declaration of a constitutional right to access eco-knowledge and to alter environmental and health conditions does tremendous work in engaging readers as the text shifts dramatically from the accessibility of “an imagined tragedy” into the density of an analysis of the scientific, industrial, and federal structures that could turn such fiction into “a stark reality” (3). The act of reading *Silent Spring*, as established in these first two chapters, positions the reader as an engaged citizen. That is, reading the book becomes a performance of the right Carson puts forth early on – it is an enactment of a specific democratic practice. On one hand, this demonstrates the relevance of narrative and literacy in the (re)formulation of a citizen-based democratic community (and, specifically, within environmentalist action). On the other hand, there are potential problems with this kind of formulation in the text, elements of which I think Carson senses and tries to address in her book, while others remain entirely out of the text’s framework.

The chapter immediately following the amendment, “Elixirs of Death,” moves the reader into the chemical composition of substances like methane, methyl chloride and anesthetic chloroform. To make the complexity of this chemistry accessible to the reader, the chapter begins with a declaration of just how vital it is to understand these processes:
These chemicals are now stored in the bodies of the vast majority of human beings, regardless of age. They occur in the mother’s milk, and probably in the tissues of the unborn child. They have immense power not merely to poison but to enter into the most vital processes of the body and change them in sinister and often deadly ways. A Who’s Who of pesticides is therefore of concern to us all. If we are going to live so intimately with these chemicals – eating and drinking them, taking them into the very marrow of our bones – we had better know something about their nature and their power. (16, 17)

“We” not only have a right to know about these things, she implies here, but we must know about them as a means to protect our bodies from such dangers – the “right to know” quickly becomes a need to know here, a shift that aids in making the chemistry that follows engaging to “us all,” not just pertinent to scientists or experts. The introduction to the chapter suggests that absorbing this narrative (even if difficult) ultimately will help “to protect the body from harm” (16). Carson then begins to include chemical structures in image form in between written passages [See Figure 1]. These images, however, do not suffice in defining the matter entirely: “But this illustration gives little hint of the true complexity of the chemical world of the hydrocarbons, or of the manipulations by which the organic chemist creates his infinitely varied materials” (20). This statement hints at a self-reflectiveness on the text’s part (i.e., commenting on its own form) and suggests that there is a need for multiple narrative forms to grasp the complexity of such an issue. The need to know depends upon the telling and reading of this complicated, multi-dimensional story that brings chemistry into contact with prose. Finally, Carson can begin to discuss her primary insecticide of concern, DDT (dichlorodiphenyl-trichloro-ethane), offering a history of its production and reasons to be extremely wary of its use. The framework of the text’s argument up to this point and its
mixed-narrative form indicates that understanding the complexity of this kind of chemical compound and the consequences of its use is inextricably connected to a storytelling exchange.

Here is where I find the text’s overlaps with contemporaneous ecosystem theory most interesting. Two decades after Tansley explained that entities “overlap, interlock and interact with one another,” Eugene Odum published *The Fundamentals of Ecology* in 1953, the primary ecology textbook of the mid-twentieth century, expanding upon this concept of ecosystem. Carson draws upon ecosystem theory (directly and indirectly) throughout her book clearly as a means to emphasize the dangers that could result out of this interconnectedness when pesticides are introduced into one link of the system. But the text also turns to these ecology concepts in moments when Carson discusses a certain kind of literacy. For instance, she explains ecological connections in one moment: “The earth’s vegetation is part of a web of life in which there are intimate and essential relations between plants and the earth, between plants and other plants, between plants and animals. Sometimes we have no choice but to disturb these relationships, but we should do so thoughtfully, with full awareness that what we do may have consequences remote in time and place” (64). This idea of an interconnected web of life-forms is, by her moment, a more familiar notion of ecology, but Carson begins to shift into a different way to conceptualize the concept of ecosystem organization by emphasizing the human role within this organization. Immediately following this description of the “web of life,” she connects the land with narrative and literacy: “If ever an enterprise needed to be
illuminated with a sense of history and meaning of the landscape, it is this. For here the natural landscape is eloquent of the interplay of forces that have created it. It is spread before us like the pages of an open book in which we can read why the land is what it is, and why we should preserve its integrity. But the pages lie unread” (64). The ecological “interplay” that she described above forms here a legible land narrative, and it produces an “eloquent” text. Similar to Aldo Leopold’s lesson to his students that they “learn to read the land” in order to do right by it, Carson suggests that a land story must be read. This “open book,” if read, tells stories of violence that have been inscribed by human actions:

As man proceeds toward his unannounced goal of the conquest of nature, he has written a depressing record of destruction, directed not only against the earth he inhabits but against the life that shares it with him. The history of the recent centuries has its black passages – slaughter of the buffalo on the western plains, the massacre of the shorebirds…, the near-extinction of the egrets for their plumage. Now, to these and others like them, we are adding a new chapter and a new kind of havoc – the direct killing of birds, mammals, fishes, and indeed practically every form of wildlife by chemical insecticides indiscriminately sprayed on the land. (85)

Human beings play a part in both writing out this land narrative and in reading it, and she defines their stories as ones of “massacre,” “slaughter,” and “near-extinction.” These passages suggest that the human role in ecological “interplay” primarily has been one of destruction. This correlation between violence, story, and the human role in ecosystem organization pushes the boundaries of how ecological interconnectedness can be understood. This idea had direct effects on the science of ecology, as Tarla Rai Peterson

34 She is speaking specifically of the destruction of sagelands in the West as they are replaced by grasslands.
and Markus J. Peterson show in their readings of the way Odum revised his textbook (the 1971 edition) after *Silent Spring* to include explicit reference to Carson, use of her metaphors, and a new activist tone. But what I am trying to point out is that before Carson’s version of the ecosystem gets written into official narratives like *The Fundamentals of Ecology*, in its circling around ideas of story, writing and literacy, it attempts to shift the study of ecology and the interests of ecologists from an isolated scientific matter to one of socio-political relevance. This conceptual and narrative shift is at the center of how environmentalist thought and discourse could become a political, citizen-led movement only a few years after the publication of this book.

As I have been showing throughout my earlier chapters and above, the shift to the literary in environmentalist thought is not new. This aspect of *Silent Spring* taps into a tradition of written narratives that equate land with narrative and land practices with acts of literacy. Similarly, Carson is saying that there are ways to write upon land and to read its histories – it is the violence in the stories that emerge that push her, Leopold, Eastman, and Zitkala-Sa to write. It also is the catalyst for the way these authors re-imagine citizen engagement in environmentalist practice and democratic belonging. This repeated analogy of a geographical eco-narrative and acts of eco-literacy that calls attention to such violences broadens the territory of environmentalist thought and practice. It also recognizes the significance of the social and political practices of the citizen. The use of story enables them to factor in the socio-political aspects of eco-concerns– it provides a language and image of interaction that ultimately calls for action. *Silent Spring* builds upon this tradition, but its particular formulation of the citizen’s role has unique elements.
This point brings me back to Carson’s use of the “right to know” which functions not only as a frame for and reason to read her book (since it presumably provides the reader with that which they should “know”), but it also constitutes both the citizen’s role in environmentalist thought and practice and the citizen’s access to healthy environmental conditions as essential rights. “Who has decided – who has the right to decide – for the countless legions of people who were not consulted that the supreme value is a world without insects, even though it be also a sterile world ungraced by the curving wing of a bird in flight?” Carson asks (127). Her answer, of course, is that these “countless legions of people who were not consulted” should be consulted, that they have a right to make decisions that affect both their physiological wellbeing (the body at risk argument I discussed above) and the environmental conditions in which they live.

*Silent Spring* shows this right put into action through its consistent use of citizen voice. By highlighting these particular voices and the stories they tell, the book demonstrates to readers that citizen engagement in these issues is becoming vibrant, and it models how the regular reader, too, could participate in such an eco-practice. For instance, Carson begins her chapter about the effects of pesticide spraying on birds with a letter, written in 1958, from “a housewife [who] wrote in despair to one of the world’s leading ornithologists, Robert Cushman Murphy” (103). The author of the letter traces the condition “here in our village” from six years prior to the current moment, stating that the spraying of DDT over elm trees throughout those years has resulted in making “the town… almost devoid of” bird life (103). In the final paragraph of her letter, the author states: “It is hard to explain to the children that the birds have been killed off, when they
have learned in school that a Federal law protects the birds from killing or capture. ‘Will they ever come back?’ they ask, and I do not have the answer. The elms are still dying, and so are the birds. Is anything being done? Can anything be done? Can I do anything?’ (103). This passage hints at a conflict between federal policy and industrial/agricultural practices – legislation is in place to safeguard, but, the results of the spraying being done by the U.S.D.A. show that such legislation has been circumvented in reality. When the author says that she cannot answer children’s questions about the absence of the legally-protected birds, she implicitly suggests that the discrepancy between a concept of federal protection under law and the reality of its (in)efficacy is a precarious one that does not go unnoticed by citizens (even by the nation’s youngest constituents, children). The conclusion of the letter, although in question form, highlights Carson’s broad answer to the author’s queries. That is, the “I” can do something, the “I” is doing something by bearing witness to and writing out the story of this problem.

Reading this letter in the context of *Silent Spring* highlights how vital this kind of voice and story are, as Carson draws upon their testimony repeatedly and deliberately positions them as legitimate sources of information and knowledge. “The citizen who wishes to make a fair judgment of the question of wildlife loss is today confronted with a dilemma,” she explains:

On the one hand the conservationists and many wildlife specialists assert… On the other hand the control agencies tend to deny…Which view are we to accept? *The credibility of the witness is of first importance*…. The best way to form our own judgment is to look at some of the major control programs and learn… just what has happened…. To the bird watcher, the suburbanite who
derives joy from birds in his garden, the hunter, the fisherman or the explorer of wild regions, anything that destroys the wildlife of an area for even a single year has deprived him of pleasure to which he has a legitimate right. This is a valid point of view. (emphases mine 86)

In Carson’s argument, scientifically trained experts and federally endorsed organizations (and operations) are not the sole bearers of valuable, irrefutable knowledge – in fact, their conflicting “assert[ions]” and “den[ials]” indicate how questionable these sources can be. Instead, Carson turns attention towards regular people who have certain specialized contact with environmental conditions in their particular communities (i.e., a fisherman has a unique perspective on the status and idiosyncracies of local bodies of water and marine-life) as sources of “credible” eco-knowledge. With echoes of Aldo Leopold’s “minority’s” “inalienable rights,” Carson’s assertion of the citizen’s “valid point of view” and their “legitimate right” to certain standards validates their land experiences and their stories, together, as eco-democratic rights and practices.

While Silent Spring draws upon these kinds of narratives over and over, it also indicates a problematic aspect in the way it plays out in a political system:

Justice Douglas tells of attending a meeting of federal field men who were discussing protests by citizens against plans for the spraying of sagebrush…These men thought it hilariously funny that an old lady had opposed the plan because the wildflowers would be destroyed. ‘Yet, was not her right to search out a banded cup or a tiger lily as inalienable as the right of stockmen to search out grass or of a lumberman to claim a tree?’ asks this humane and perceptive jurist. ‘The esthetic values of the wilderness are as much our inheritance as the veins of copper and gold in our hills and the forests in our mountains.’ (72)

Carson certainly sides with Douglas’s assertion that human access to uncorrupted nature is an “inalienable…right,” a concept that mimics almost verbatim Leopold’s earlier conception of it when he explains that “For us of the minority… the chance to find a
pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech” (my emphasis). But this passage also suggests a problem with the political consequences of attempting to assert this right, as “inalienable” as they may imagine it to be. The regular citizen’s role in environmentalist practice, specifically the narration aspect of it, is caught here between its legitimization in Silent Spring and its lack of validity in the political system of the U.S. In the reality of this scenario, this witness who has a part to narrate in the bigger story of “the spraying of sagebrush” and something to demand of “federal field men” ultimately is only laughed at by them – that is, her role in formulating environmentalist policy is entirely invalidated by official decision-makers.35

The problematic nature of turning the citizen’s story into policy also is played out in the final chapter of Silent Spring, “The Other Road.” Carson uses Robert Frost’s poem as a metaphor for changing the direction of environmental practice: “We now stand where the two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost’s familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway…but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road – the one ‘less traveled by’ – offers our last, our only chance of reaching a destination that assures the preservation of our earth. The choice, after all, is ours to make” (277). This explicit return to fiction at the conclusion of the book suggests to me how literacy and narrative are useful tools for shaping a political argument and galvanizing citizen action, but it also

35 Part of this dismissal, according to Carson’s reading of Douglas’s comment on this moment, also is connected clearly with the witness’s age and gender – that is, as an “old lady,” her gripe with the spraying is ridiculed as a particularly female and outdated one.
suggests that the book is somewhat conscious of the limitations of reading, of the kind of literacy I have been talking about, as a form of lived action with real-life socio-political repercussions. In upsetting the metaphorical equity of Frost’s two roads and revising them as environmentally inequitable, Carson disrupts the idea of eco-literacy as environmentalist action on its own. That is, framed with fiction (beginning with Carson’s own fable and closing with reference to this “familiar poem”), Silent Spring emphasizes that there certainly is a necessary place for story, but it also indicates that the eco-narrative needs to move off of the written page (and the act of reading the written page) into a new kind of lived action that extends out of this reading practice.

Silent Spring attempts to resist the limitations that I think are implied under the surface here, and, as I have been discussing, the book indicates a clear investment in the role of the regular citizen and the place of story in environmentalist action. As much as the book emphasizes these things as a form of democratic right, at the same time it glaringly lacks engagement with the variations in the kinds of stories different citizens who have different political and civil rights would tell. That is, while Silent Spring honors what Carson calls “local evidence” and gives a platform for regular citizens’ voices, it also neglects to attend to the ways these voices vary. Early in the book, Carson focuses on children, telling a particularly gruesome story, for example, of “a healthy child who became little more than a vegetable” within hours of contact with a spray product called endrin intended to kill roaches (27). She moves from children into “workers” who

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36 This connection between environmental action and Frost’s poem emerges again in 1976 when Amory Lovin wrote a significant article about energy conservation entitled, Energy Strategy: The Road Not Taken?
are subjected to these chemicals on a regular basis, specifically mentioning orange 
pickers and sprayers. She argues that the chemicals in these sprays are a particular 
“danger to all workers” (30). From here, she moves quickly into the threat this causes for 
everyone, not just workers, claiming, for instance, that “the common salad bowl may 
easily” contain these dangers (32). The stories that Carson compiles in *Silent Spring* after 
this point are told from a particular point of view, one that certainly is not from the 
perspective of “workers.” Rather, they primarily are accounts offered by middle to upper 
class citizens who have direct access to wilderness or natural areas on their personal 
property and in their local communities. The kinds of ecological destruction which these 
citizens witness and the environmentalist concerns that arise as a result reflect their class 
position. For instance, Carson asks that her reader consider “that commodity prized by 
every chamber of commerce throughout the land – the good will of vacationing tourists” 
(69). She offers this particular testimony as an example: “‘We are making a dirty, brown, 
dying-looking mess along the sides of our roads,’ a New England woman wrote angrily 
in her newspaper. ‘This is not what the tourists expect, with all the money we are 
spending advertising the beautiful scenery’” (69). Concern over tourism, interest in the 
aesthetic value of landscapes, and empathy for something like insect populations who 
“deserve something better from us than the senseless destruction of their habitat” indicate 
the class-based quality of the eco-politics Carson is shaping here (73). Although she 
again mentions “workers” (non-U.S. workers, that is) later in the book during a 
discussion of cancer, she does not provide their voices, testimonies, etc. anywhere in the 
book.
Silent Spring ends up shaping its argument primarily around “gardeners” and “homeowners” whose environmentalist investments extend out of their capacity for private ownership. The Long Island case with which I began this chapter models the class-based role in environmentalist action, and Carson’s explicit mention of it in her book confirms this. In her explanation of the history behind the case, Carson explains that the DDT was “showered down…with impartiality” upon gardens, dairy farms, fish ponds, salt marshes, horses (she mentions one in particular that died within ten hours of the spraying), flowers, shrubs, cars, and “the quarter-acre lots of suburbia, drenching a housewife making a desperate effort to cover her garden… and showering insecticide over children at play and commuters at railway stations” (158). The result of the “impartiality” of the spraying is a widespread regional victimization – from flowers to housewives – and Carson argues that the success of the case, although it ultimately was dismissed, is that it brought this problem to the public: “The suit brought by the Long Island citizens at least served to focus public attention on the growing trend to mass application of insecticides, and on the power and inclination of the control agencies to disregard supposedly inviolate property rights of private citizens” (emphasis mine 159). What this comes down to, then, is property rights – that is, it is specific to a certain class (and culture) with the capacity for private land ownership. As a result, the kind of constitutional rights Carson defines in Silent Spring – “to know” and to thrive in a healthy environment – end up being attached primarily to property rights. The argument for the “right” to these things ultimately is predicated upon a resource-based notion, then: who can use these lands and how becomes confined to a debate between property owners
and federal and industrial practices. The book does not engage with the questions that arise out of this problematic equation, such as discussing for whom the resources of private land are accessible, and how this accessibility would change the dimensions of environmentalist concern.

This problem also is applicable to the absence of race analysis in the framework of the book’s argument. The one time race is referenced in *Silent Spring* is in the context of chemical residues in food. Carson turns directly to the native to model a chemical-free diet and body: “To find a diet free from DDT and related chemicals, it seems one must go to a remote and primitive land, still lacking the amenities of civilization. Such a land appears to exist, at least marginally, on the far Arctic shores of Alaska – although even there one may see the approaching shadow. When scientists investigated the native diet of the Eskimos in this region it was found to be free from insecticides” (179). Carson’s brief mention of indigenous land and the indigenous body (she goes into the analysis of their “fat samples”) packs in long-used concepts and a vocabulary of natives as “remote,” “primitive,” and “margin[al]” to the U.S. and its citizens in terms of culture, land use, and even physiology. This language creates a clear divide (and racialized difference) between “Eskimos” and her presumably non-“Eskimo” readers, while it also implicitly relies upon old concepts that imagine the native as a pure, noble savage.

As the brief discussion of these figures continues, Carson says that “small residues of DDT” were found in some of their fat samples, explaining that these particular subjects had “left their native villages to enter the United States Public Health Service Hospital in Anchorage for surgery [where]… the ways of civilization prevailed,
and the meals…were found to contain as much DDT as those in the most populous city” (180). These once-pure natives become infected with chemical residue when they move in from the margins, when they shift from the primitive into the civilized zones: “For their brief stay in civilization the Eskimos were rewarded with a taint of poison” (180). It seems that they only are safe in primitive remoteness. Ultimately, the discussion of these raced indigenous bodies and their fat samples reads as quite similar to the immediately preceding discussion of traces of DDT found in milk, butter, and other dairy products. In no way does the book deliberately engage with the role of race, specifically indigeneity, in its presentation of environmental problems. Nor does it indicate any self-awareness that turning to the native in this way problematically contributes to primitivizing discourses that identify the native as marginal and uncivilized (masked, as it is, in an implicit suggestion that they are noble for this primitiveness). And, it certainly does not delve in any way into how natives themselves might speak to this issue, the ways these conditions offer particular stories to contribute to environmentalist concerns, etc. Like the dairy products, natives are voiceless examples of the extent of DDT poisoning here, a correlation that clearly relegates them to non-citizens. The concepts of constitutional right and investment in “local evidence” provided by regular citizens, both of which Silent Spring highlights from cover to cover, remains entirely out of the conversation about natives. The noble savage comes to serve again in shaping eco-political thought, here as a sample of a pre-modern toxin-free environment.

The romantic nature of Carson’s vision of pure indigenous peoples becomes clearer still if we consider the way Indian reform changed in the years prior to the publication of *Silent Spring*. After World War II, the sentiment and policy dictating the relationship between American Indians and the U.S. began to change along with the growing conservatism and fear of foreigners. The U.S. government turned back to assimilationist policy and put into effect a three-part program of compensation, termination, and relocation to encourage Indians to move from reservations to cities. When Dillon S. Myer, the former head of the War Relocation Authority that had interned thousands of Japanese Americans during the war, became the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1950, he was critical of many of Collier’s New Deal policies. He argued that “The Bureau [of Indian Affairs] should do nothing for Indians which Indians can do for themselves” (qtd. Calloway 424). The result was House Concurrent Resolution 108, enacted in 1953, which stated: “As rapidly as possible, to make the Indians within the territorial limits of the United States subject to the same laws and entitled to the same privileges and responsibilities as are applicable to other citizens of the United States, to end their status as wards of the United States, and to grant them all the rights and prerogatives pertaining to American citizenship.” It proposed to terminate federal services to the tribes that had made the most “progress,” and services to more than sixty Indian tribes was terminated within the following decade.

Although it was twenty-nine years since all Indians had been granted citizenship in the U.S., House Concurrent Resolution 108 reads primarily as a new citizenship law. Indians, *again*, are legislated to share in the “laws,” “privileges,” “responsibilities,”
“rights and prerogatives” of U.S. citizens. While the consistent reiteration of citizenship status in these Indian policies indicates how citizenship is a malleable concept that functions beyond legislation, it particularly highlights how, for Indian citizens, this malleability is connected directly with the way their land use role is legislated. In this particular version, their citizenship is dictated by their residence “within the territorial limits of the United States,” moving away from the more nuanced concept of both tribal and U.S. citizenship of the IRA and returning to the heavily assimilationist logic of the Dawes Act.

The policies of termination and relocation emphasized assimilation of indigenous peoples into the body politic and the geography of the U.S. as key to citizenship. But Rachel Carson’s version of indigeneity relies on outlying peoples (both geographically and culturally) – people and places that exist “marginally” – whose citizenship status never enters into her picture. Since *Silent Spring* is so invested in the role of the citizen, this obvious absence draws attention to the way Indian peoples and indigeneity are symbolic without retaining the democratic rights Carson is so concerned about for U.S. national constituents elsewhere.

More broadly, drawing upon but not engaging with questions of class and race in this moment is problematic beyond the confines of the book itself in two particular ways. Carson, even more so than Leopold, is writing in a moment when Civil Rights movements are being formalized as well. Her use of this language of constitutional right devoid of an engagement with the way this right plays out for citizens other than white, middle to upper class ones marks a gaping hole in the way environmentalism would be
shaped and put into formalized practice in this moment. Rather than identifying overlaps with these civil rights movements – that is, finding points of mutual contact and political investment – environmentalism becomes framed as a white, middle class issue. Also, Carson’s sense of the “impartiality” of the spraying over these particular communities as a problem has dire consequences years later if we put it in line with the Not In My Backyard movements which, in a sense, put partiality into practice. Beginning in 1980, these movements typically were led by affluent, white citizens whose voices could be heard and influence put into official action. Arguing that environmental hazards and other harmful nuisances should not be “in their backyard,” many “locally unwanted land uses” (“LULUs”) disproportionately were located in marginalized, impoverished, non-white communities as a result. While certain groups of citizens were saved from the effects of these contaminants, then, these other particular citizens and their neighborhoods bore the brunt of the dire environmental and physiological effects of these “hot spots.”

Nonetheless, the direct and indirect responses to Silent Spring from various realms indicate how the book was a tremendous force in putting into motion the next formal stage of environmentalism.38 On the mainstream level, Carson participated in a

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38 Murray Bookchin published Our Synthetic Environment (under the pseudonym Lewis Herber) in 1962, a few months prior to the publication of Silent Spring. Although he covers similar topics and concerns, his book did not take on the same widespread readership and popularity. I believe that the limited interest in his version of these matters, among others, comes out of the difference in narrative styles. Although Our Synthetic Environment was intended for a general reader, it does not, like Carson’s book, move between fictional form and scientific analysis, a move that I have been showing is key in engaging regular people and citizens to care about these issues. While Carson included the fable/myth form at the start of her book and continued to speak to and for the general reader, Bookchin’s style
CBS special, “The Silent Spring of Rachel Carson,” in 1963 to debate against a chemical company spokesperson, Dr. Robert White-Stevens who argued: “If man were to faithfully follow the teachings of Miss Carson, we would return to the Dark Ages, and the insects and diseases and vermin would again inherit the earth” (qtd. MacGilivray 71). This sentiment uses inflammatory language of infestation and primitivism (connected with both race/racist sentiments and Cold War discourses of invasion by the foreign other) to describe his particular apocalyptic vision of altered environmental conditions. Carson framed her perspective in the context of a particular environmentalist moment: “I think we’re challenged, as mankind has never been challenged before, to prove our maturity and our mastery not of nature but of ourselves” (qtd. McGilivray 71). The foundation for environmental management shifts in her argument from the “mastery” over “nature” to a management of human actions.

On the federal level that same year, Carson also was summoned to testify before Congress to President Kennedy’s Science Advisory Committee (called the Ribicoff Committee in honor of its head Senator Abraham Ribicoff) about the research she had presented in Silent Spring during which she argued adamantly for the citizen’s right to live lives free of poisons and suggested that a citizens’ advisory board be created to

39 The overlaps in the type of language and discursive tactic between Carson’s book and White-Stevens’ statement here indicates the complexity of both the formulation and the political consequences of using this kind of vocabulary in environmentalist argument. That is, although they are arguing contrary points, their language shares in ways that ultimately could conflate oppositional arguments. I will discuss this dynamic in my final chapter, particularly in relation to Ruth Ozeki’s recent novel All Over Creation.
enforce this right. The committee’s report ultimately confirmed Carson’s earlier findings about the dangers of pesticides. Although the findings did not immediately affect farming practices, it did prompt a change in cultural representations of these chemicals. For instance, garden magazines, which had been supported by chemical company advertisements, began to shift their message to the responsible use of chemicals by consumers. This same line of thought—citizen responsibility in safe chemical usage—also was taken up by the American Medical Association and *Today’s Health* (Murphy 147).

The years following the publication of *Silent Spring* were packed with extensive environmental legislation, including the Clean Air Act (1963), the Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Act (1965), the Water Quality Act (1965), and the Air Quality Act (1967). In *Storm King v. Federal Power Commission*, decided in 1967, the rights of citizens to challenge federal projects that affect the environment were upheld. The first Earth Day was organized in 1970, and the Nixon Administration established the Environmental Protection Agency that same year. Although the federal government began to restrict

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40 Senator Ribicoff famously welcomed Carson by commenting, “Miss Carson, you are the lady who started all this.” This comment is reminiscent of Lincoln’s welcome to Harriet Beecher Stowe at the height of the Civil War: “So you’re the little lady who started this whole thing.” It is interesting and not surprising that the outcome of these texts could have been equated, if not intentionally. That one was a race matter and the other an environmental one also corresponds with the points I have been trying to make regarding the way these issues are circling around each other.

41 It was at the second Earth Day in 1971 that the famous “Crying Indian” commercial was released in which the viewer follows Iron Eyes Cody as he paddles his canoe through a litter-filled stream beside pollution-spewing smokestacks, and walks up to a highway where trash is thrown from a passing car to burst open at his feet. When the camera looks up from the litter to zoom in on Cody’s face, a slow tear streams down his cheek, and the tagline is stated: “People start pollution. People can stop it.” This is a
pesticide use in the U.S. 1969, it was not until December 31, 1972 that DDT was banned. After several months of EPA hearings between 1971-1972 (during which scientists provided evidence both for or against DDT usage), the first Administrator of the EPA, William Ruckelshaus, announced that DDT was to be banned from use and classified as a Toxicity Class II substance.

A new edition of *Silent Spring* was released in 1994, including an Introduction by Al Gore, an addition that the cover of the book emphasizes: *Silent Spring* WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY VICE PRESIDENT Al Gore. Gore offers familial, political and historical accounts of the book, emphasizing his sense that *Silent Spring* is infused with an American spirit that offers it its remarkable strength. According to Gore, Carson’s “thoroughly researched and brilliantly written argument… changed the course of history” (xv), and he attributes much of the modern environmental movement to the text: “Without this book, the environmental movement might have been long delayed or never have developed at all” (xv). He draws upon the language of value—“Rachel Carson showed that the excessive use of pesticides was inconsistent with basic values” (xxi)—and morality—“Reducing pesticides in food is now becoming a marketing tool as well as a moral imperative” (xxvi). We have seen the seeds of this kind of language in Leopold’s and Carson’s writings (and it begins even earlier, as I discussed above), and it is similar clear example of how environmentalist action and the production emerging from it returned consistently to a certain figure of the native in order to define its mission.

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to the vocabulary that has emerged again in our current moment in the discourses surrounding what Gore recently termed “the climate crisis.”

Ultimately, Gore argues that *Silent Spring* did something definitively American:

“It brought environmental issues to the attention not just of industry and government; it brought them to the public, and *put our democracy itself on the side of saving the Earth*” (emphasis mine xxv). Gore maintains a long rhetorical tradition of understanding environmentalist sentiment as an element of democracy, and although he does not use rights discourse as Leopold and Carson did, his understanding of this democracy uses a revised version of the Progressive Era ideal of “the people”: “The government must act, but the people can also decide – and I am convinced that the people will no longer let the government do nothing, or do the wrong thing” (xxvi). Environmental *action*, over thirty years after the original publication of *Silent Spring*, is read here as a careful combination of citizen-centered concern/decision-making and federal enactment of those decisions. Gore’s introduction highlights how, *Silent Spring* (the “powerful proof of the difference that one individual can make”) is a text not only about environmental conditions and changes, but also a narrative about democratic practice, citizen engagement, and American individualism.

The boundaries of this narrative would be expanded in the decades following Aldo Leopold’s and Rachel Carson’s work. The question of political *right*, the language of which I have tried to show as present yet limited in Leopold’s and Carson’s writings, is put to a new test in these following years through court debates over legal standing for non-human entities and social and political movements to redefine
democratic rights for human citizens of the U.S. Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson give shape to an environmental ethic and environmental action, and both politicize the scientific, ecological, or environmental through the literary form. But the nuances embedded within their narratives, the complexities that they hint at primarily via their consistent use of a rights discourse, go unattended for the most part. These critical loose ends begin to come to the forefront a couple of decades later, and my last chapter will track this emergence and its effects on the shape of environmentalist practice, its potential for race and class analyses, and the crucial role of the literary form in narrating the complex dimensions of eco-citizenship in the final decades of the twentieth-century.
Chapter 5
The Protesting Organic Citizen:
Standing, Seeds, and Stories Redefine Eco-Democratic Participation

“I pick these events and make them stories because only then will people listen.”
-Linda Hogan, 2002

“…[W]e are responsible. Intimately connected, we’re liable for it all.”
-Ruth Ozeki, All Over Creation (2003)

I. Introduction

In 1972 legal scholar Christopher D. Stone posed the provocative question, “Should trees have standing?” Stone presented his compelling reasoning for an emphatic affirmative response to this question in an essay entitled Should Trees Have Legal Standing?: Toward Legal Rights For Natural Objects. He argued with gusto, “I am quite seriously proposing that we give legal rights to forests, oceans, rivers and other so-called ‘natural objects’ in the environment – indeed, to the natural environment as a whole” (9). Published just prior to the Supreme Court’s decision in the landmark case Sierra Club v. Morton (1972), Stone’s essay put the issue of legal standing for non-human natural entities into legal discourse. Although his essay presented a fresh concern and set of concepts in the legal realm, this issue of standing sits within a much longer history of environmentalist thought, one that I have been showing also moves well beyond the borders of federal legislation. Stone’s argument participates in a broader eco-narrative
that brings together the language and concepts of civil rights with environmental concern. His essay, as well as the Court decision and minority opinions in *Sierra Club v. Morton*, mark a critical transition within this narrative; for the first time, the legal community and the Supreme Court were faced with the explicit mission of defining the social and political aspects of non-human nature. These connections had been present since environmentalist thought entered into federal jurisdiction at the turn of the twentieth century, and Aldo Leopold, in particular, had politicized nature in the formative years of the modern environmental movement in the middle of the century. But it was not until this case that the association between ecological entities and the political system of the U.S. was spelled out so explicitly in legal language and put before the Supreme Court to rule upon.

The question of non-human nature’s legal standing has uneasy ties to the later emergent environmental justice movement, and this link helps us to see the connections among environmentalist sentiment, concepts of citizenship, and democratic action in this moment. The legal deliberation over non-human nature’s standing foreshadowed the environmental justice movement’s political work to expose the links across environmental conditions or natural resources and the human political position in a citizenry. But the legal narrative also pinpointed some of the exact problems that led to the formation of the movement. Questions of political right and voice are present in both the legal standing documents and the ideology of the environmental justice movement, but I will show how they operate quite differently in each. This difference is significant because it marks both the political overlaps and complex gaps that have existed between
environmentalism and civil rights movements since the turn of the twentieth century, a
tension that comes to a head in these decades leading up to the turn of the twenty-first
century.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 and the controversial snail darter case that
used the act in 1978 (*TVA v. Hill*) begin to illuminate how the legislation of standing for
non-human ecological entities and the actual lived experience of human beings with
political rights are paradoxically mutually-defined and defined in opposition to one
another. I will examine how the concerns at hand in these two texts do more than present
to the Supreme Court and the public a strictly environmental issue of ecological species
preservation; rather, I argue that they dramatize in the legal realm the complexities of
vesting both ecological entities and human subjects with political rights. This collapse
between the rights of non-human nature and human beings is particularly important to
examine in terms of the way American Indians’ civil rights become submerged within
environmentalist issues in these legal narratives.

When the environmental justice movement emerges within the decade following
these cases, it attempts to call attention to the disproportionate eco-political inequities
experienced by (and physical harm suffered by) people of color. While these debates are
happening in the real-life social, political and legal arena, literary writing and storytelling
provide a tool for examining and publicizing the intricacies of these experiences. That is,
the literary form gives human voice to the interior dimensions of this struggle to publicly
speak from the margins. In her discussion of literature as cultural critique, Joni Adamson
argues, “If we want to create landscapes different from European American landscapes of
domination and control, we will need to articulate our different positions [and] analyze and explicate the underlying bases of social and ecological injustices.” (99).

The literary form becomes a crucial element in the new “articulation,” and hence, in reimagining new dimensions of the long-standing connection between an environmentalist sensibility and citizenship. Two relatively contemporary novels, Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms* (1994) and Ruth Ozeki’s *All Over Creation* (2003), fictionalize environmental activism as essential democratic practices in which the issues of human social (in)justice and ecological destruction merge. These novels revise the dimensions of environmental and democratic practice and, in doing so, are essential contributors in the long line of eco-narratives I have been tracking throughout my project. While a language of plants helped naturalize ethnic and racial others one hundred years earlier, Hogan’s and Ozeki’s novels complicate this language, disrupt the early nationalist elements embedded within it, and provide a new literary-political analysis of the way race and culture are intricately connected to environmentalist thought, practice, and policy.

Richard G. Fox and Orin Starn define a space of protest practice “in between resistance and revolution.” They see this zone as “the ample and charged territory between the cataclysmic upheaval of revolutionary war and the small incidents of everyday resistance, namely the thousands of social struggles where people enter into open protest yet do not seek the total overthrow of the social order…..the midways of mobilization” (3).

I suggest that *Solar Storms* and *All Over Creation* sit within this space by narrativizing a range of social transformations that move from the very personal level (individual and family), to the local community (specific land-based communities), to
tactics that are broadly legible as acts of resistance such as organized protests. In reading these novels not only as participants in protest practice generally, but as articulate critiques of the associations among race, culture, and environment, we can recognize how they play an essential role in redefining the way environmentalist thought has functioned throughout the last decade and in positioning story as a politically useful narrative. In this chapter, I continue to examine legislation that I argue simultaneously defines the ecological world and the human political citizenry. The Court’s deliberation over where the lines of political subjectivity can be drawn (and the legal, social and ethical implications of this subjectivity) is rooted in the legal realm, but I situate this debate alongside social protest movements and literary writing to explore how narratives of resistance emerge out of both the public and personal realms.

II: “Should Trees Have Standing?”: Giving Voice and Political Subjectivity to Nature

“To flesh out the rights of the environment demands that we provide it with a significant body of rights for it to invoke when it goes to court.”

- Christopher D. Stone

Decades before Christopher D. Stone wrote his tree-standing essay, Aldo Leopold had narrated an environmental ethic that imagined the ecological realm as participant in a political system. To Leopold, “sober citizen[s]” of the natural world have a “biotic right,” and like human citizens, they play a vital role in an eco-political “land of the free, home of the brave.” (239) When Rachel Carson began to publish articles in the late
1930’s, she too used this concept and language of citizenship and national belonging to define the significance of the ecological in human society. She asks of the starling, for instance, “Shall we then continue to regard him as an alien or shall we conclude that his successful pioneering and his service in insect destruction entitle him to American citizenship?” Tarla Rai Peterson argues that “…Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* galvanized a generation, and permanently politicized ecology” (31). Locating Leopold and particularly Carson as the foundation for sustainable development discourse, Peterson notes “the political power of [the] combination of moral, ethical, cultural, political, and scientific concerns…” (8). As I discuss in my previous chapter, it is the careful interconnections among these concerns and the use of story that sparked public attention and instigated regular citizen participation in environmentalist thought and practice (exemplified most poignantly in the emergence of the modern environmental movement, which was formalized on the heels of Carson’s book). This politicization of the ecological world, which was both written out in environmentalist narrative and acted out in public sentiment between the 1930’s and 1960’s, lays groundwork for the legal, social, political, and literary examination of a relationship between ecological entities and political rights.

The Supreme Court case *Sierra Club v. Morton* and Christopher D. Stone’s essay were the first to grapple legally with this question in the early 1970’s. In general, both are the products of the direction of the encompassing eco-narrative that I have been chronicling; that is, they come about in this particular moment because of the emergence of the contemporaneous environmentalist sensibility and the way that notion is being
narrated in print, and because of the underlying political force underlying that sense of environmentalism. This emergence requires the official narratives of a political system, one that defines itself as a democracy that is, to engage with and provide answers for these theoretical and legal gaps in constitutional definition. In addition to this broad context, a particular issue triggered these official responses. In 1969, the United States Forest Service accepted Walt Disney Enterprises, Inc.’s plan to construct an extensive ski resort and summer recreation complex across eighty acres in the Mineral King Valley near Sequoia National Park.¹ The Sierra Club showed interest in this proposed land sale from its conception, attempting to organize a public hearing (to no avail) as soon as the Forest Service presented a prospectus calling for development proposals for the area in 1965. In June of 1969 representatives of the Club filed a suit in the District Court for the Northern District of California. They sued as a membership corporation with "a special interest in the conservation and the sound maintenance of the national parks, game

¹ The Court’s decision in Sierra Club v. Morton included a useful description of the development plans: “Prodded by a rapidly increasing demand for skiing facilities, the Forest Service published a prospectus in 1965, inviting bids from private developers for the construction and operation of a ski resort that would also serve as a summer recreation area. The proposal of Walt Disney Enterprises, Inc., was chosen from those of six bidders, and Disney received a three-year permit to conduct surveys and explorations in the valley in connection with its preparation of a complete master plan for the resort. The final Disney plan, approved by the Forest Service in January 1969, outlines a $35 million complex of motels, restaurants, swimming pools, parking lots, and other structures designed to accommodate 14,000 visitors daily. This complex is to be constructed on 80 acres of the valley floor under a 30-year use permit from the Forest Service. Other facilities, including ski lifts, ski trails, a cog-assisted railway, and utility installations, are to be constructed on the mountain slopes and in other parts of the valley under a revocable special-use permit. To provide access to the resort, the State of California proposes to construct a highway 20 miles in length. A section of this road would traverse Sequoia National Park, as would a proposed high-voltage power line needed to provide electricity for the resort. Both the highway and the power line require the approval of the Department of the Interior, which is entrusted with the preservation and maintenance of the national parks.”
refuges and forests of the country," and they argued that the aesthetic and ecological value of the region would be severely damaged.\textsuperscript{2} The case moved from district court (which granted a preliminary injunction) through the Court of Appeals (which reversed the district court’s decision) and finally to the Supreme Court (which ultimately upheld the Court of Appeals’ decision, allowing the development to proceed).

The issues made legally pertinent here and the documents produced in this legal and conceptual battle brought Leopold’s earlier sentiment of politicized ecological entities into new light. There is a particular traceable move here, both on the part of the Sierra Club representatives and in the written production surrounding the case, towards a specific kind of engagement with land use legislation, one that makes the issue of standing central in natural resource management. There are significantly larger questions at the heart of this case than solely how the land site will be used: Who has legal rights? How are these legal rights defined for both human beings and ecological entities? How do these rights function in the United States, a political system that utilizes nature for economic purposes and as a means to symbolically define itself as a nation? The answers to these questions are central to the way a democratic system defines itself and its members. The emergence of the issue of standing within this case and the debate around it brings to light the ways in which environmental legislation does more than define ecological entities as “natural objects” – questions of political subjectivity and the role of the citizen are deeply implicated in this legislative formulation as well.

\textsuperscript{2} [405 U.S. 727, 731]
Christopher D. Stone publishes *Should Trees Have Legal Standing?: Toward Legal Rights For Natural Objects* in response to this case, hoping that the essay’s argument for extending legal rights to non-human nature might influence the Court’s decision. Stone immediately points out that it is not “only matter in human form that has come to be recognized as the possessor of rights. The world of the lawyer is peopled with inanimate right-holders: trusts, corporations, joint ventures, municipalities, Subchapter R partnerships, and nation-states, to mention just a few” (5). The fact that such non-human entities already function as persons in a judicial system allows Stone and his readers to entertain the question of whether or not these rights might extend to additional non-human forms.

Stone builds the real force behind his argument when he makes an explicit connection between nature that lacks rights and once-rightless human communities that lacked rights at one time finally gained legal standing as “persons” in the United States. “We have been making persons of children although they were not, in law, always so,” he argues, “And we have done the same, albeit imperfectly some would say, with prisoners, aliens, women (especially of the married variety), the insane, Blacks, foetuses [sic], and Indians” (4). The extension of legal personhood to these groups may have seemed unreasonable at one time, only to be recognized as a “moral nee[d]” after the Court designated them as rights-bearing.³ Stone highlights the constructed nature of this

³ He uses the term “moral needs” in the conclusion of his essay when he discusses “School Desegregation Cases which, more importantly than to integrate the schools (assuming they did), awakened us to moral needs which, when made visible, could not be denied” (53).
political system: “Throughout legal history, each successive extension of rights to some new entity has been, theretofore, a bit unthinkable. We are inclined to suppose the rightlessness of rightless ‘things’ to a decree of Nature, not a legal conviction acting in support of some status quo” (6). Although previously “unthinkable,” the Court’s official extension of rights to these groups eventually results in a public recognition of the necessity for it. This type of shift in “public consciousness” from the “unthinkable” to the acceptable is what he suggests is at hand in this nature standing issue, and he uses this history to support the focal point of his argument.

At the center of Stone’s essay is his connection between subjugated nature and (once) legally and socially/culturally subjugated peoples, a link that he emphasizes repeatedly to highlight the “moral” and legal imperative behind defining “the rights of the environment” (35). He uses this link between human and environmental standing to analyze the limitations of environmentalist thought and policy:

None of the natural objects, whether held in common or situated on private land, has any of the three criteria of rights-holder. They have no standing in their own right…In such fashion, these objects have traditionally been regarded by the common law, and even by all but the most recent legislation, as objects for mento conquer and master and use – in such a way as the law once looked upon ‘man’s’ relationships to African Negroes. Even where special measures have been taken to conserve them, as by seasons on game and limits on timber cutting, the dominant motive has been to conserve them for us – for the greatest good of the greatest number of human beings. Conservationists, so far as I am aware, are generally reluctant to maintain otherwise. As the name implies, they want to conserve and guarantee our consumption and our enjoyment of these other living things. In their own right, natural objects have counted for little, in law as in popular movements. (bolded emphases mine, italics original to text 16)

Stone articulates a profound critique of conservationist policy by explicitly linking it with race politics. This passage explicitly correlates the “conquer[ing] and master[ing]” of
natural entities and the conquering and mastering of human slaves (although he does not use that exact word here). It links marginalized, enslaved, non-rights-bearing human beings with the position of natural non-human entities. He uses this connection to provide a critique of the land use concepts at the center of conservationist thought and policy, condemning the sentiment behind a philosophy and practice focused on “the greatest good of the greatest number of human beings” (almost the exact phrase Gifford Pinchot coined to define conservationism as it became U.S environmental policy at the turn of the century). In the passage, this human use-based concept of the environment mirrors a use-based notion of human beings that was enacted in slavery. Stone shows how the politics and practices of resource management and enslavement can be seen as the same, but his concept of the two works differently from the way this conflation functioned at the turn of the century. While writers and public figures had both implicitly and explicitly articulated this eco-social connection decades earlier (as I have shown in previous chapters), Stone’s essay deliberately brings them together to question and analyze both systems as (similarly) legally flawed. By highlighting the socio-cultural connection between an abuse of the environment and an abuse of people, Stone’s essay finally puts a synthesis between race analysis and environmentalist sensibility into legal discourse and contestation as a means of legal-political critique.

One of the most significant challenges the essay raises in dismantling the legal constructs of conservationist resource management is the issue of “voice.” Stone carefully dismisses the idea that persons need to possess the physiological ability to speak as a means to articulate their rights in court: “It is not inevitable, nor is it wise, that
natural objects should have no rights to seek redress in their own behalf. *It is no answer to say that streams and forests cannot have standing because streams and forests cannot speak.* Corporations cannot speak either; nor can states, estates, infants, incompetents, municipalities or universities. Lawyers speak for them, as they customarily do for the ordinary citizen and legal problems. One ought, I think, to handle the legal problems of natural objects as one does the problems of legal incompetents…” (emphasis mine 17). He fine-tunes the argument to suggest that “when a friend of a natural object perceives it to be endangered, he can apply to a court for the creation of a guardianship” (17), adding “If there were indications that under the substantive law some redress might be available on the land’s behalf, then the guardian would be entitled to raise the land’s rights in the land’s name…” (19). The problem of “voice” is one we will see emerge years later in the realm of environmental justice, particularly in terms of the legal credibility of local testimony. Here, though, this element of Stone’s argument philosophically/theoretically supports the Sierra Club’s attempt to stop the development of Mineral King, since it would establish them as a “friend of a natural object” who may represent and voice its rights in Court.

Stone’s essay presents a sophisticated combination of issues with which the majority does not thoroughly engage in their decision in *Sierra Club v. Morton*. The Court appears to actually agree with elements of the Sierra Club’s argument, but this commonality lies primarily in those long-standing traditional terms of nature-for-nation:

The injury alleged by the Sierra Club will be incurred entirely by reason of the change in the uses to which Mineral King will be put, and the attendant change in the aesthetics and ecology of the area. Thus, in referring to the road to be built
through Sequoia National Park, the complaint alleged that the development ‘would destroy or otherwise adversely affect the scenery, natural and historical objects and wildlife of the park and would impair the enjoyment of the park for future generations.’ We do not question that this type of harm may amount to an ‘injury in fact’… Aesthetic and environmental well-being, like economic well-being, are important ingredients of the quality of life in our society… But the ‘injury in fact’ test requires more than an injury to a cognizable interest. It requires that the party seeking review be himself injured. (emphasis mine 5)

The Court recognizes that a road through Sequoia National Park will produce direct “injury” to the natural area, and it generally acknowledges a value in “aesthetic and environmental well-being,” a value it defines in relation to “economic well-being” as similarly significant to broader “society.” But the Court quickly moves its focus from the importance of the “aesthetics and ecology of the area” to the particular way “injury” can be argued and adjudicated in a court of law. As it moves into an argument about “injury,” the language of the decision turns to the citizen: “The impact of the proposed changes in the environment of Mineral King will not fall indiscriminately upon every citizen. The alleged injury will be felt directly only by those who use Mineral King and Sequoia National Park…The Sierra Club failed to allege that it or its members would be affected in any of their activities…” (emphasis mine 5). While the Court recognizes that injury will be done to the natural area, this harm is not its concern. Although this ruling adjudicates the way a certain plot of land may be used, the Court ultimately focuses on injury and the citizenry. It does not ground its decision in the admitted damage to the natural area, but instead deliberates over the extent of the injury on human citizens. In the Court’s estimation, the development would not affect all members of the general public; rather, it would affect only a limited number of citizens – “those” who would
have a “direc[t]” experience with the site. Ultimately, the Court based its final decision on this point, ruling not only that the Sierra Club did not have “standing as a ‘representative of the public,’” but that it also did not sufficiently prove “individualized injury”: “Held: A person has standing to seek judicial review under the Administrative Procedure Act only if he can show that he himself has suffered or will suffer injury, whether economic or otherwise. In this case, where petitioner asserted no individualized harm to itself or its members, *it lacked standing to maintain the action.*” Although the Court ruled against the Sierra Club, its decision invited the Club to reshape its approach in order to show “individualized injury,” ultimately allowing the district court to rule in the Club’s favor when the case was remanded back to the lower court for additional proceedings.

The question of standing is vital to the case and the Court’s final decision, but neither the Sierra Club nor the Court broach the concept Stone put forth in the midst of this legal battle – the question of whether Mineral King and Sequoia National Park could have *their* rights represented in court. All parties and the final decision focus on *use* in relation to legal standing – that is, the conservationist (Sierra Club here), the developer (Disney Enterprises here), and the Court all argue the terms of their positions through a human citizen’s *right to use* natural spaces in certain ways. Stone’s argument, as I have begun to show, and the dissenting opinions in *Sierra Club v. Morton* do something different – they point to the complexity of this standing issue by extricating it from such a use-based argument. The essay and these opinions use the language of rights, and they
move beyond the “citizen” (which the Court focuses on) to the “person” as legal subject, a distinction that begins to expand the range for political standing.

Justices Douglas, Brennan and Blackmun filed dissenting opinions in *Sierra Club v. Morton*, and their opinions criticize the decision on what they understand as vast limitations in defining either standing or nature’s rights. Justice Blackmun’s dissent attends to the issue of whether or not the Sierra Club should be given the right to represent an ecological entity. In order to get to this precise argument, his opinion demands on a broader level that the Court reevaluate the way law should address contemporary problems: “The case poses – if only we choose to acknowledge and reach them – significant aspects of a wide, growing, and disturbing problem, that is, the Nation’s and the world’s deteriorating environment with its resulting ecological disturbances. Must our law be so rigid and our procedural concepts so inflexible that we render ourselves helpless when the existing methods and the traditional concepts do not quite fit and do not prove to be entirely adequate for new issues?” (21). In an argument that echoes Rachel Carson’s earlier suggestion that the “forefathers” of the U.S. did not address environmental problems only because they could not yet have imagined them, Blackmun is forceful in his position that the law must adapt to never-before-dealt-with environmental concerns.4 His proposed solution to this problem of applying

4 As I discuss in my previous chapter, Carson wrote, “If the Bill of Rights contains no guarantee that a citizen shall be secure against lethal poisons distributed either by private individuals or by public officials, it is surely only because our forefathers, despite their considerable wisdom and foresight, could conceive of no such problem.” (*Silent Spring*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994 (1962). p. 12-13.) similarity in their arguments indicates how literary-political engagement and legal grappling with environmental questions are questioning and at times challenging constitutional restraints.
“inadequate” and “traditional concepts” to these “new issues” is to “permit an imaginative expansion of our traditional concepts of standing” in order to enable an organization such as the Sierra Club, possessed, as it is, of pertinent, bona fide, and well-recognized attributes and purposes in the area of environment, to litigate environmental issues” (emphasis mine 22). ⁵ For Blackmun, we need no additional proof of ecological ruin and this case provides the opportunity and it demands that traditional legal structures, particularly in regard to standing, be revised.

Justice Douglas extends Blackmun’s critique of “procedural limitations,” emphatically arguing for an additional dimension to the way standing should be revised: “Contemporary public concern for protecting nature’s ecological equilibrium should lead to the conferral of standing upon environmental objects to sue for their own preservation” (11).  Turning to Stone’s essay here as a foundation for his position, Douglas develops his opinion out of an argument that “inanimate objects” (he writes particularly of ships, as does Stone) can be “parties in litigation,” suggesting that this right should extend to “valleys, alpine meadows, rivers, lakes… groves of trees….that feel the destructive pressures of modern technology and modern life” (11).  Such ecological entities should be granted standing, he continues, because each one “speaks for the ecological unit of life that is part of it” (11).  This idea of an “ecological unit” comprised of interconnected

⁵ He is careful to address a main concern of the Court (as expressed in the decision) that the right to such representation could lead to unrestricted capacity on anyone’s part to bring suit in the future: “This incursion upon tradition need not be very extensive…It need only recognize the interest of one who has provable, sincere, dedicated, and established status.  We need not fear that Pandora’s box will be opened or that there will be no limit to the number of those who desire to participate in environmental litigation.  The courts will exercise appropriate restraints just as they have exercised them in the past” (22).
parts reflects ecosystem theory, as I discussed in the previous chapter, but Douglas
extends this scientific concept, arguing that such interdependencies demand that each of
the unit’s parts be granted the legal right of standing as each is an essential member in a
living system.

Finally, he brings together the writings of Christopher Stone and Aldo Leopold to
work through the way standing connects directly with the issue of voice, a link that the
Majority decision did not engage:

*The voice of the inanimate object, therefore, should not be stilled…. [B]efore these
priceless bits of Americana are forever lost or are so transformed… *the voice of
the existing beneficiaries of these environmental wonders should be heard* [He
footnotes Leopold here]. Perhaps they will not win… That is not the present
question. *The sole question is, who has the standing to be heard?...*
Then there will be assurances that *all of the forms of life which it represents will
Stand before the court* - the pileated woodpecker as well as the coyote and bear,
the lemmings as well as the trout in the streams. *Those inarticulate members of
the ecological group cannot speak. But those people who have so frequented the
place as to know its values and wonders will be able to speak for the entire
ecological community.* Ecology reflects the land ethic; and Aldo Leopold wrote in
*A Sand Country Almanac* (1949), ‘The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries
of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the
land.’ That, as I see it, is the issue of ‘standing’ in the present case and
countroversy. (emphases mine 13)

He shifts from thinking not only about who can *speak* or give *voice* to also thinking about
who can “be heard,” an important addition in that it expands the potential “persons” who
can be granted standing. Merging Stone’s more recent concept of standing for
ecological entities and Leopold’s concept of a land ethic that brings the ecological and
the human into a shared community (and a shared ethical obligation towards each other),
Douglas is able to argue for both nature’s standing and for the standing of their
representative spokespersons as legally and ethically necessary.
Unlike the Court’s decision, the dissenting opinions do not use the language or concept of the citizen. Instead, in focusing on the question of standing (as Douglas writes, “The sole questions is, who has the standing to be heard?”), they redirect the conversation to the legal concept of *personhood*. This shift makes sense when we consider that a “person” in legal theory is defined as “an entity (such as a corporation) that is recognized by law as having the rights and duties of a human being. . .” (Black’s Law Dictionary) and as “any being whom the law regards as capable of rights and duties. Any being so capable is a person, whether a human being or not…Persons are the substances of which rights and duties are the attributes… For the purposes of the due process clause, either a citizen or an alien. For the purposes of extradition, either a citizen or an alien” (Ballantine’s Law Dictionary). By attending to the issue of standing through questioning the legal “person,” Stone (explicitly) and Blackmun and Douglas (implicitly) move beyond the legal and discursive restraints of citizenship. Personhood allows for something more encompassing than restricted citizenship – someone or something, “either citizen or alien” with “rights and duties.” The notable absence of the language and figure of the citizen in these critiques indicates how these pieces are working to extricate environmentalist practice and legalities from a use-based theory, a discourse we have seen as intricately connected to the language of citizenship and role of the citizen.

The eco-narratives that gave shape to the legal standing debate in this moment begin to articulate pointed concerns and to present significant questions about how the environmental world (ecological entities) can function in a sociopolitical, judicial, human system. This period in environmental legislation is an important part of the story I have
been chronicling – its position after the Long Island case I discussed in my previous chapter and prior to the organization of the environmental justice movement which I will discuss below marks the beginning of an essential shift in the way “environmental well-being” can be understood and legislated in relation to human and ecological “injury.” The emergence here of the deliberate legal questioning of who has the right to speak, voice, legally argue, and litigate within the environmental realm will take on new dimensions when human groups begin to highlight how these same issues are at play in relation to their civil rights, and additionally, how that connection between “environmental well-being” and “injury” has particular bodily, communal and cultural repercussions on certain individuals and groups in the U.S.

III: The Tellico Dam: A Small Fish Makes Big Waves

"I think we've got a little fish that may save your farm."

– David Etnier, 1973

It has been uncommon for environmentalists, American Indians and farmers to find common political ground and unite in a shared position on land use. But a significant case beginning in the 1960’s sparked such a union. When the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) began to construct a dam at the mouth of the Little Tennessee River in 1967, a number of vastly diverse groups joined in protest – farmers and farm organizations, the Eastern band of Cherokee Indians (located across the Smokies in North Carolina) and the United Ketooah Band (in Oklahoma), local sportsmen (hunters and
fishermen), archaeologists, biologists, colonial historians, birdwatchers, hikers, campers, flower clubs, and law students. While each group was invested in the issue for a different reason, they formed a powerful, albeit primarily unorganized, resistance to the building of Tellico Dam, and together they questioned the economic benefits claimed by the TVA to justify the development.

The story of the Tellico Dam and the extensive protest surrounding its construction is important here for a number of reasons. First, it demonstrates how an issue defined as environmental in nature actually can encompass a wide range of concerns, and it shows how this kind of complexity is absent in official narratives (that is, on the judicial level). Second, it highlights both the strength of combining environmentalist and native protest, while also demonstrating the problematic elements of subsuming a civil rights issue within a broader environmentalist argument and narrative. I will look at the way this case, one that is relevant to multiple groups for multiple reasons, gets legislated primarily around (and is publicly known as) an environmental question of endangered species (as the first real test of the Endangered Species Act of 1973). The less known conclusion to this highly contested issue is the legal battle Cherokee peoples took on in 1979 and 1980 following the environmental cases. The complicated connections and vast differences in the way these groups argued for a stop to the Tellico Dam project and the varied success each group achieved in court dramatize a dissonance in notions of environment, culture, and political membership. We need to see how these conflicts are played out in the legal and political arena to
understand the true complexity of later fiction writing that novelizes elements of these same underlying issues.

The Tellico Dam project called to condemn thirty-eight thousand acres on the Tennessee Valley floor and to submerge thirty-three miles of the Little Tennessee River under water. In the process, 340 families would be evicted from their farms (of rich agricultural soils) and the 18th century Overhill Cherokee towns Chota, Tanasi, and Tuskegee would be submerged. Prior to Jackson’s removal of the Cherokee to Oklahoma (as a result of the Indian Removal Act of 1830), these areas had been the center of Cherokee civilization, and after removal, these sites remained significant to Cherokee peoples since they retained burial mounds and plants with medicinal properties. There was a lot at stake for these groups in the building of the dam and in the development of its surrounding area for a resort.

Although multiple concerns were at play here in addition to conservationist investment in the ecological value of the land, the issue was argued along the lines of environmental impact from the outset. The initial case against TVA was brought in 1971 by a local landowner and a coalition of environmental groups led by the Environmental Defense Fund (at a point when twenty-nine million dollars already had been put into the

More than 1,200 bodies were exhumed during construction and Joe McCaleb’s law review article, *Stewardship of Public Lands and Cultural Resources in the Tennessee Valley: A Critique of the Tennessee Valley Authority* highlights how this might not be the final count: “In Middle Tennessee, commercial and residential development is now moving to the alluvial flood plains along the major rivers and tributaries, resulting in frequent uncovering of Indian burial sites and often entire villages” (http://www.vje.org/journal/VJEL10004.html).
development).\textsuperscript{7} Within a year, the TVA provided a mammoth environmental impact statement refuting all claims of environmental degradation and defending its proposed economic benefits, which the court found to be sufficient. But, in the summer of 1973, a monumental discovery of a very small creature was made. David Etnier, a biologist at the University of Tennessee, captured a tiny fish near a creek called Coyote Spring in the Little Tennessee River. Although only about three inches in size, this fish would provide the leverage protest groups needed to demand a stop to the construction. Etnier, immediately realizing the potential import of this little creature, allegedly told a local farmer that day, “I think we've got a little fish that may save your farm” (73 U. Colo. L. Rev. 867, 921-941).

The Snail Darter, as it came to be called because it fed exclusively on the freshwater snails in the watershed, was not only new to the scientific community (and to the broader human population), it also was extremely rare. Its rarity and centralized location in this particular, soon-to-be destroyed ecosystem were made legally relevant four months after Etnier’s discovery when Congress passed the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The shared timing of the snail darter’s discovery and the passing of the ESA could not have been more perfect for protest groups, providing them with a fresh legal tool, and offering an immediate test to examine how the provisions of the act would be

\begin{quote}
They based their position on the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 which had defined a general mission: “To declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation; and to establish a Council on Environmental Quality.”
\end{quote}

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enforced. A heated political debate on both the judicial and public levels about the conflicting interests of business/economic interests and environmental conservation resulted.

The ESA’s message was articulated clearly, and its mission was rigorous. Congress declared its primary findings and purpose at the start of the act:

[T]hese [threatened or extinct]species of fish, wildlife, and plants are of aesthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people; (4) the United States has pledged itself... to conserve\(^8\) to the extent practicable the various species of fish or wildlife and plants facing extinction...to better safeguard[d], for the benefit of all citizens, the Nation's heritage in fish, wildlife, and plants.

The reasoning behind ESA’s protection of these species reads here as a matter less of the species themselves than a benefit to national welfare – the “aesthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people.”

The language of endangerment in the act merges the threat to species with the threat to the nation, and it collapses the protection of species with the protection of citizens and a national heritage – “better safeguarding, for the benefit of all citizens, the Nation's heritage in fish, wildlife, and plants.” While the long-standing narrative of nature-nation shapes this act, again framing the need for conservation in nationalist terms and conflating citizenship with ecological being, it also lays out new and stringent guidelines for the federal role in conserving not only land in general, but also non-human species living upon it. Provisions within the act also indicate a more nuanced understanding of  

\(^8\) The act defines "conserve," "conserving," and "conservation" as: “to use and the use of all methods and procedures which are necessary to bring any endangered species or threatened species to the point at which the measures provided pursuant to this Act are no longer necessary.”
land in that it refers consistently to ecosystems (at this point general knowledge, and a
more complicated idea of multiple interacting systems, rather than parts of one single
system). This distinction between a general concept of land and a particular ecosystem is
essential to the way in which the enforcement of species protection could actually be
carried out. The Secretary of Commerce is given the power to designate the habitats of
endangered or threatened species a “critical habitat” if “the failure to designate such area
as critical habitat will result in the extinction of the species concerned.”

When Hiram Hill, a law student at University of Tennessee, interested his
professor Zygmunt J.B. Plater in the matter, the two joined Etnier in petitioning the
Department of Interior to list the Snail Darter as an endangered species. In the meantime,
TVA, sensing the peril of its project as a result of this impending designation desperately
tried to locate darters in other locations (seventy rivers were searched to no avail), and the
agency even began an unregulated transplantation project, attempting to relocate the
darters to different locations to prove their existence and viability in various habitats
(with inconclusive results at the time, later proving ineffective). When the Department of
the Interior formally listed the Snail Darter as “endangered” in April of 1975 and
designated the thirty-three mile zone of the Little Tennessee River marked for Tellico as
its “critical habitat,” it seemed clear that construction of the dam and reservoir would be a
case of “adverse modification” of this habitat and would put the Snail Darter in
“jeopardy.” Hill and company had what seemed like solid grounds to sue the Tennessee
Valley Authority to stop development, and so the judicial debate that had been initiated
but quickly dismissed years earlier was rekindled with gusto.
Although the lower court found in TVA’s favor, deciding that the jeopardy of the darter was outweighed by the fact that eighty percent of the work on the dam had been completed, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the decision. This court found that since jeopardy was explicit, the language of the act required that an injunction be ordered. The Supreme Court had discretion as to whether to choose to review the lower court’s decision, and multiple factors made review by the Supreme Court appear unlikely at the outset— it would be met by the conservative Republican Chief Justice Warren Burger; the location under contestation was the home of the most powerful Republican in the Senate, Howard Baker; and the first test of the ESA was centering around a minimally marketable image of a small fish (not a wolf, an eagle, etc.). However, the Court shocked everyone with its final decision to uphold the Court of Appeals’ decision, finding that the Endangered Species Act “admits of no exception” to compelling injunction in such a case. But it also provided a loophole in suggesting that Congress would be the only power under existing law to potentially provide relief for TVA. Congress quickly stepped in, passing an amendment in 1979 to establish the Endangered Species Committee, giving it the authority to exempt specific projects from the Endangered Species Act.\(^9\) Comprised of the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of the Interior, the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, the Secretary of the Army, the head of the EPA, the head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and a state representative, the Committee was nicknamed “The God Squad” because it was given life.

\(^9\) The amendment was tacked onto the Energy and Water Development Appropriation Bill, Pub. Law No. 96-69.
and death power over listed endangered species. The God Squad ultimately decided in favor of TVA, lifting the injunction and allowing the project to be carried out to its end. President Carter signed the bill with reluctance (he had been greatly opposed to dams like Tellico when Governor of Georgia) due to political pressure (include it here) to win Senate votes to return U.S. held Panama Canal. Over 17,000 acres of land were flooded when the gates were closed on Tellico Dam in January of 1980.

The public controversy, media, and historical record of the situation surrounding the Tellico Dam have focused primarily on the snail darter debate – which makes good sense in many ways given that the conflict between (economic) development and environmentalist land ethic was being put to the test in a new way in this moment, following the visibility of (and more widespread acceptance of) environmental concerns by the middle of the century and the budding organization of the modern environmental movement. But this kind of issue certainly had been argued within a somewhat different framework time and again throughout the history of the United States in the context of Native American presence on land that the U.S. legislated as its own.10 In the particular case of the Tellico Dam, these two conflicts explicitly merge, making it a complex matter that moves well beyond the boundaries of species preservation to include critical questions of native rights, cultural preservation, spiritual continuity, and land ethic. Although this part of the Tellico saga – the Cherokees’ legal battle to preserve the land charted to be flooded – is essential to understanding the vast dimensions of the judicial

10 I am careful to suggest here that it is only a “somewhat different framework” because I have been showing throughout my project how Indian reform and environmental reform had significant overlaps.
decision to allow for development, it has not been a widely circulated part of the narrative (neither then nor since).

When Congress and President Carter gave officially approved the completion of the TVA project once and for all in 1979, the Eastern band and the United Ketooah Band of Cherokees brought suit in Ammoneta Sequoyah, et al v. Tennessee Valley Authority, asserting that the freedom to practice their traditional religion and to maintain their culture would be irreparably harmed by the dam. Similar to the impeccable timing of the Endangered Species Act for the environmentalist argument, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act had just been passed in 1978, providing a legal tool for American Indian groups to bring suit from a different angle. In this act, Congress declared its intention “to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions…including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites.” However, unlike the strict guidelines set out in the ESA, this act lacked enforcement provisions, leading to multiple lawsuits to clarify the dimensions of this “right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions.”

Using the American Indian Religious Freedom Act as one of its primary legal bases, the Cherokee plaintiffs argued that the land site was a “sacred homeland” (Chota, in particular, was once the capital of the Cherokee homeland), and they claimed that the construction would destroy “sacred sites, medicine gathering sites, holy places and
cemeteries, [and would] disturb the sacred balance of the land.”11 Although the district court denied the request for injunction, its decision did something really interesting. On one hand, it explicitly recognized the site as significant to religious practice: “The Court assumes that the land to be flooded is considered sacred to the Cherokee religion and that active practitioners of that religion would want to make pilgrimages to this land as a precept of their religion.” However, even though the court acknowledged that the development would deny Cherokees access to this site for such purposes, it ruled that this restricted access was not “invidiously discriminatory” since “the flooding of the Little Tennessee will prevent everyone, not just plaintiffs, from having access to the land in question.” The rationale underlying this decision is oddly reminiscent of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Sierra Club v. Morton*. Here, the district court denied the Cherokees’ request to enjoin an alleged discriminatory governmental act, but this legal reasoning works in a similar way to “injury,” since the court rules that the development would not discriminatorily affect an individual group (the Cherokee plaintiffs), but would affect the general public as a whole (i.e., any injury here would be widespread, not specific to an individualized group). Seemingly the reverse of this ruling, in *Sierra Club v. Morton*, the Court denied generalized standing because “the impact of the proposed changes in the

11 The Court of Appeals summarized this position well in 1980: “The plaintiffs brought this class action on behalf of ‘all those present or future Cherokee Indians who practice the traditional Cherokee religion and adhere to Cherokee Indian tradition and culture.’ The principal relief sought in the complaint was an injunction to prevent completion and flooding of the Tellico Dam on the Little Tennessee River in Monroe County, Tennessee. The complaint alleged that the impoundment created by the dam will cause irreparable injury to the plaintiffs. This injury will be caused by flooding of the ‘sacred homeland’ of the plaintiffs along the river, which will result in destruction of ‘sacred sites, medicine gathering sites, holy places and cemeteries, (and) will disturb the sacred balance of the land . . .’ It was further stated that the threatened actions of the defendant would cause ‘irreversible loss to the culture and history of the plaintiffs.’

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environment of Mineral King will not fall indiscriminately upon every citizen.” The Court uses the rationale of “injury” to rule on this discriminated shared burden – although the development would injure the land site, this injury potentially would affect people only on an individual level rather than affecting all members of the public. (The Sierra Club, the Court concluded, had not sufficiently proven this “individualized injury,” though, and so it lacked standing.) Both cases, one being argued from an environmentalist angle and the other being argued from an Indian rights angle, deal with land development (the conflict between economics and land ethics) and both court narratives turn to questions of group rights, whether it uses the legal logic of discrimination or injury to define its ruling. But while proving individual injury ultimately gave the Sierra Club more leverage (once the case was remanded back to the district court), it is exactly the piece that lost the case for the Cherokees at the district court level (even though it is named as not “invidiously discriminatory” rather than lacking “individualized injury”). Although slightly different legalese, the overlap in the way these cases were decided shows yet again a conflation of concerns and sentiment in the way environmentalist and Indian rights matters are legislated. That the Sierra Club ultimately was given the opportunity to provide testimony to prove its standing, while the Cherokees (who provided testimony from the outset) were dismissed points to the way environmental legislation was more effective than Indian legislation as a fight for rights on the judicial level, giving environmental groups who represent ecological sites, as well as actual ecological entities like the species designated in the ESA, greater power as legal subjects.
When the Court of Appeals looked at the Cherokee case in 1980, the rationale for its decision was very different from the district court’s – focusing, instead, on the actual question of the freedom to exercise religion.\textsuperscript{12} The court noted immediately that the American Indian Religious Freedom Act could not be used in this case, as the amendment signed by President Carter had specified that neither the ESA nor any other law could impede the completion and use of Tellico Dam. Instead, it turned attention to the constitutional free exercise clause in the First Amendment. This document includes a number of affidavits from Cherokee peoples, both directly quoting and paraphrasing their testament to the sacredness of the land site, an element of the case that the district court entirely avoided. This inclusion of testimony is vastly different from what we have seen in earlier cases, including even the district court’s decision just a year prior to this one. The court uses this sample testimony to state, first, that these affidavits indicate to them that Cherokee religion has a particular connection with land: “The Cherokees who are plaintiffs in this action obviously have great reverence for their ancestors and believe that the places where their ancestors lived, gathered medicines, died and were buried have cultural and religious significance.\textsuperscript{13} Similar feelings are shared by most people to a greater or lesser extent. However, because of their beliefs respecting the transmission of knowledge and spiritual powers to succeeding generations, particular geographic

\textsuperscript{12} Ammoneta Sequoyah, Richard Crowe, Gilliam Jackson, individually and representing other Cherokee Indians similarly situated; the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; and the United Ketooah Band of Cherokee Indians v. Tennessee Valley Authority

\textsuperscript{13} The Native American Grave Repatriation Act did not exist until 1990 (when it was signed by President Bush). It undoubtedly would have played a role in the deliberations of this case in terms of those who had “died and [were] buried” in this site.
locations figure more prominently in Indian religion and culture than in those of most other people.” This specificity, though, does not win the case for the Cherokees. The court’s reading of the testimony indicates to them that there is no “claim of centrality or indispensability of the Little Tennessee Valley to Cherokee religious observances,” and that although Cherokee religion might “dra[w] spiritual strength from feelings of kinship with nature,” ultimately the court ruled that they had “fallen short of demonstrating that worship at the particular geographic location in question is inseparable from the way of life…, the cornerstone of their religious observance…, or plays the central role in their religious ceremonies and practices.” It finalizes the outcome of the legal dispute (and the entire Tellico Dam saga in this period) by ruling:

The overwhelming concern of the affiants appears to be related to the historical beginnings of the Cherokees and their cultural development. It is damage to tribal and family folklore and traditions, more than particular religious observances, which appears to be at stake. The complaint asserts an ‘irreversible loss to the culture and history of the plaintiffs.’ Though cultural history and tradition are vitally important to any group of people, these are not interests protected by the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.

Judge Merritt authored the sole dissent, reasoning that while he agreed with the centrality argument, he thought that the case should be remanded back to the district court so that the Cherokee plaintiffs would be given the opportunity to prove “the significance and centrality of their ancestral burial grounds in light of the standard we have adopted.” Such an opportunity, like the one given to the Sierra Club to prove their standing, was not awarded to the Cherokee, and their ancestral land was flooded in the final stages of the
project, including their burial grounds and medicinal plants.  Different knowledge and belief systems are at work and in conflict here, making the land use issue very difficult to resolve. While the court of appeals decided that the land was significant to culture, it did not recognize the extent to which culture and this piece of land are tightly bound. This connection is precisely the one that Cherokees try to show in the case, but the courts and the parameters of U.S. legal thought do not recognize it.

These Cherokee cases were happening in a particular moment of intense legislation around land use and Indian rights. As I briefly mentioned in Chapter One, *Cappaert v. United States* (1976) extended the Antiquities Act of 1906 by declaring that both land and its rare inhabitants could be designated as national monuments. In this context, we now can see how *Cappaert v. United States* merges the sensibilities of both the Antiquities Act and the Endangered Species Act, the rare inhabitant being defined as not only an endangered or threatened species, but also a national treasure. This environmental legislation both harkens back to the turn of the century ideals of nature/nation, and uses a contemporaneous concept of species preservation (a desert fish in this instance). American Indian subjects and their cultural practices are caught in this synthesis of a conservationist land ethic and the rhetoric of preservation (as a cultural and nation-building necessity). The shared concepts and language used in the legislation of preservation continue to link the environmental preservation of ecological sites or entities

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14 A similar issue almost ten years later had a different outcome than the Tellico debate. In *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association* (1988), “the Supreme Court overturned a lower court injunction on the building of a logging road in the Six Rivers National Forest in California which the Yurok Indians argued would cause irreparable damage to sacred sites” (Calloway 491).
with the cultural preservation of native peoples or tradition. The Tellico Dam issue is a useful example of the way environmental protection and Indian cultural preservation are constantly in connection, and the narratives produced out of this debate indicate, too, how the environmental realm becomes a venue within which both can politically maneuver to a certain extent. While this eco-realm is a productive vehicle, there also is a problematic way in which the synthesis of these two conflate the tremendous differences in concerns for human civil rights and for environmental conservation.

As the Cherokees brought their suit against the TVA in 1979, two cases arose that dramatically highlight the complicated ways environmental problems and civil rights concerns merge. They also demonstrate the specific needs of certain communities in relation to environmental issues, making it clear that these are not easily definable, nor are they easily extricable from one another. First, the worst release of radioactivity in the United States occurred on Black Mesa (the “four corners” of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico) when United Nuclear Corporation’s uranium tailings dam failed at Church Rock, directly outside the Navajo reservation. One hundred million gallons of radioactive water were released into the Rio Puerco River, killing 10,000 sheep. In 1966, the Peabody Coal Company signed leases with Hopis and Navajos to establish operations on their lands, but by the early 1970s, many Navajos opposed Peabody’s coal strip mining operation since it posed a significant risk of pollution to their community and also threatened to exposed workers to excessive radiation levels, causing lung cancer and other respiratory illnesses. The nuclear accident polluted the single source of water for the Navajo people surrounding the area and made eating and selling the livestock that
drank this water also impossible. The acute toxicity of the water produced skin burns, some of which led to infections requiring amputations. Valerie Kuletz notes that the Rio Puerco accident was significantly more catastrophic than Three Mile Island, but unlike the well-reported Three Mile Island, this nuclear accident did not receive national media attention, and it also received minimal follow through in terms of testing for soil contamination and exposure. The matter was settled out of court with a collective payment of $525,000 to victims (Kuletz 26-27).

In another part of the United States and in a different community, Bean v. Southwestern Waste was filed in Houston, Texas. This case was the first to challenge the siting of a waste facility in an urban, middle-class neighborhood comprised of eighty-two percent African Americans on civil rights grounds. Although the statistics showed that fifteen of seventeen solid-waste facilities used to dispose of Houston’s garbage were located in mostly African American communities (a number made more staggering when one takes into account that African American residents comprised only twenty-eight percent of the city’s total population), the judge ruled that “purposeful discrimination” had not been demonstrated (Gaylord and Bell 30; Cole and Foster 125-126).

In some ways similar to the Long Island case in the sixties (which I discussed in my previous chapter), the Rio Puerco nuclear accident and Bean v. Southwestern Waste dramatize the way environmental conditions and practices put human bodies and public health at risk. What is glaringly different about these cases from the earlier Long Island one, though, is that in these, particularly raced bodies are at risk and there is a strong correlation between the contamination (as well as the official response to this
contamination) and the race of the communities in danger. This realization was coming into focus in this moment to some communities that the quality of their neighborhoods and their public health appeared to be more expendable than white, upper middle class neighborhoods and peoples. Robert D. Bullard explains, “All communities are not created equal. Some are subjected to all kinds of environmental assaults…Institutional racism influences local land use, enforcement of environmental regulations, industrial facility siting, economic vulnerability, and where people of color live, work, and play…People-of-color communities have borne a disproportionate burden of this nation’s air, water, and waste problems as well as the siting of sewer treatment plants; municipal landfills; incinerators; hazardous-waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities; and other noxious plants” (25-26). Bullard had become a leading scholar and spokesperson in this field, beginning in 1979 when his studies of Houston land use uncovered that garbage dumps were disproportionately impacting African Americans,15 a trend that Dr. Bullard ultimately detected in areas across the nation.

Organized local protests began to emerge around these documented and lived connections between race, class and toxic waste disposal. Although there are mixed opinions on the definitive origin of environmental justice protest, the protest staged in Warren County, North Carolina in 1982 is widely viewed as the original moment that

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inspired the organization of the Environmental Justice Movement. Here, primarily African American residents of Warren County protested the state’s proposal to use 142 acres of their county land for a PCB landfill. When their first lawsuit was rejected, they brought a second suit based on discriminatory intent (based on race and class status), but the failure of this second lawsuit allowed for the contaminated soil to be transported into their neighborhood in 1982. Joined by civil rights leaders, the residents attempted to stop the trucks transporting the soil and they staged six weeks of peaceful disobedience, resulting in 523 arrests and national media attention.

There are a number of significant events that contributed to the development of this movement, but I will mention only a select few here to mark some of the main moments and to demonstrate the time span from the end of the 70’s through the 90’s, a fact relevant to the publication of the novels I will discuss below. The first national study to connect the siting of waste facilities with demographic characteristics was published in 1987. The study, “Toxic Waste and Race,” conducted by the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, concluded that race was the most significant factor in

16 In my own project, I have tried to show how figures like Jane Addams and Zitkala-Sa are generating an environmental justice activism decades prior to the formal organization of the movement. Cole and Foster note the long standing history of the movement as well: “…the movement grew organically out of dozens, even hundreds, of local struggles and events and out of a variety of other social movements,” including the Warren County protest in 1982, African American students’ protest over the drowning of a child in a garbage dump in Houston in 1967, Martin Luther King Jr.’s support of striking garbage workers in 1968, the United Farm Workers’ struggle beginning in the sixties against pesticide poisoning in the workplace. They also specify, “Some Native American activists and others consider the first environmental justice struggles on the North American continent to have taken place 500 years ago with the initial invasion by Europeans” (20). Similar to Cole and Foster, I believe that the movement can look back to all of these events, including a vast array of additional struggles not mentioned here. But I am interested in how this particular moment generates a consistent and deliberate or purposeful movement on the part of local citizens (particularly people of color and indigenous citizens) to protest the way environmental conditions affect their health and communities.
determining the location for waste facilities. “Among other findings, the study revealed that three out of five African Americans and Hispanic Americans lived in communities with one or more uncontrolled toxic waste sites, and 50 percent of Asian-Pacific Islander Americans and Native Americans lived in such communities. A follow-up study in 1994 concluded that this trend had worsened.”\(^{17}\) The early 90’s brought the meeting of the First People of Color Leadership Summit in Washington D.C. where they forged the Principles of Environmental Justice (1990), the EPA established an Office of Environmental Justice (1992), and President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898 (1994) to federally recognize environmental justice concerns and to establish the responsibility of federal agencies in dealing with the issue.

The problems made publicly visible in the environmental justice movement highlight how environmentalist thought is multi-dimensional and certainly not restricted to a concern for nature, per se. The traditional conservationist notion of environmentalism expands – the concern here is not access to land for pleasure or national welfare nor an interest in the land existing for its own sake; it becomes a matter of the endurance of peoples and cultures. On one hand, this has a direct connection to the type of questioning I examined earlier in regard to Stone’s famous question, “Should Trees Have Standing?” That is, what emerges in this moment is a multivalent deliberation over if and to what extent political rights extend to U.S. subjects (both ecological and human). On the other hand, though, environmental justice officially

\(^{17}\) See http://www.geology.wisc.edu/~wang/EJBaldwin/PCR/ pcrwhatispcrEJhistory1a.htm
pinpoints something indigenous communities and people of color had experienced since the birth of the United States in a moment when new technologies, advanced nuclear development, and increased waste made it a quantifiable issue in the broader eye of the national public. Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster note, “Coalition building, mastery of technical language, development of technical expertise, direct action, litigation, and direct participatory democracy have all been used in various social reform movements for decades. Nevertheless, as applied to environmental struggles in poor communities and communities of color, these techniques are helping to redefine both ecological awareness and the meaning of the ‘environment’ itself” (19). This synthesis of environmental and civil rights concerns sparks organized action that ultimately complicates (at least) and dismantles and redefines (at best) narratives of environmentalism and the concepts of political subjectivity embedded in them. It also makes clear that environmental conditions are of vital significance in civil rights struggles and vice versa, that these civil rights struggles are of vital significance to environmentalist thought and practice. Since an essential element to the environmental justice movement is a consideration of the local citizen’s right to live free of environmental contaminants, testimony and voice (on local community and individual levels) become central to articulating and enacting opposition. As a result, literary writing and story become a powerful method of narrating experience and vocalizing opposition.
Environmental racism impacts American Indian peoples and communities in specific ways for two main reasons. First, the history of the relationship between the United States and native communities revolved around land use and federal resource management since the conception of the U.S. (although those terms – land use and resource management – would not be attached to such practices until the turn of the century, of course). This long history of cultural and legal dissonance between native and U.S. systems of thought and environmental practice had formed the bedrock of the inequities in the relationship and the foundation for native resistance throughout centuries (coming to a particular head in the sixties and seventies with the actions of the American Indian Movement). Cole and Foster recognize the long-standing Native American “struggl[e] for self-determination in land use decisions” as an essential element of the emergence and organization of the Environmental Justice Movement: “Native American activists brought to the Environmental Justice Movement the experiences of centuries of struggle for self-determination and resistance to resource-extractive land use…As the first victims of environmental racism, Native Americans brought a deep understanding of the concept to the Environmental Justice Movement” (26-27).

Second, sovereignty posed an additional difference in the way environmental policy affected native communities, making the relationships among the U.S., the states, and sovereign Indian nations even more complex. The crucial significance and particularity of sovereignty to environmental policy and practice is made clear in official
documentation in 1984 when the EPA published the Policy for the Administration of Environmental Programs on Indian Reservations.\footnote{This policy was an extension of President Ronald Reagan’s earlier publication of a Federal Indian Policy in 1983 stressing Indian “self-governance” and the need to work with Tribal Governments on a “government-to-government basis.”} The policy “set forth the principles that will guide the Agency in dealing with Tribal Governments and in responding to the problems of environmental management on American Indian reservations in order to protect human health and the environment.” Although Indian sovereignty had been federally recognized and defined by the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934 (which I discussed extensively in my previous chapter), the EPA policy established fifty years later defined this sovereignty in environmental terms, explicitly negotiating sovereign status in relation to resource management.\footnote{As I discussed in the previous chapter, although Indian reform and not environmental policy, per se, the IRA did bring an environmentalist sensibility and even land use concepts into its legislation of Indian status. The difference I am noting here, though, is that the EPA’s 1984 policy is explicitly an environmental policy (not Indian reform), but it still keeps Indian status at its forefront, again exemplifying the persistent link between the legislation of American Indian peoples and resource management (in sentiment and law).} The policy officially states the EPA’s recognition of “Tribal Governments as sovereign entities with primary authority and responsibility for the reservation populace,” and it sets apart these governing entities from Federal, State, and local governments in resource management. Cole and Foster note a direct link between native sovereignty and EJ, arguing that Native Americans “helped define one of its central concepts, self-determination. The centuries-old Native American idea of sovereignty echoed with, and helped create, the Environmental Justice Movement’s credo, ‘We speak for ourselves.’” While for some other communities the slogan was an attempt to take back environmental policy decisions from traditional
environmental groups, for Native Americans the slogan defined their relationship to state and federal governments” (27).

It was precisely this need to speak and act for oneself as an Indian nation that underlay the creation of Citizens Against Ruining our Environment (CARE) on the Navajo Reservation in Dilkon, Arizona in 1988. The Dilkon community united as a means to research and protest the proposed building of a “recycling facility” on the reservation. Their research quickly uncovered the facility to be a toxic waste incinerator intended to burn chemicals and industrial waste from oil fields, lumber yards, and hospitals, including medical waste such as human body parts and amputated limbs (Cole and Foster 135). Although the Tribal officials of the Navajo Nation originally gave approval for the money-making and employment-producing proposal (in a town with almost seventy-five percent unemployment), CARE’s protest and the resistance it sparked in towns across the reservation led them to rescind their approval, ultimately terminating the project. This case exemplifies an additional layer of complexity in regard to the way environmental policy plays out on the lands of sovereign nations in the U.S. Cole and Foster explain how companies turned directly to Native communities in the late 1980’s because “they were seeking jurisdictions with less regulation, and less environmental oversight and enforcement, than were imposed by state governments…. [They] sought to capitalize on the confusion over environmental regulatory authority on Indian lands: state law does not apply to Indian lands if it is preempted by federal law or if its imposition would interfere with a Tribe’s ability to regulate and govern its own affairs, so Native lands are not subject to the more stringent
environmental requirements imposed under state law” (138). There are multiple factors interacting in these cases then – looser federal or state environmental authority, high levels of poverty and unemployment on reservations that made the economic development opportunities more appealing, corruption (financial deals between corporate negotiators and native officials), masked information and the need to uncover the details of proposed projects, the organization of local activism, and public health concerns.

Small groups like CARE eventually merged to organize a coalition called The Indigenous Environmental Network in 1990. Based in Minnesota and comprised of more than forty grassroots Indian environmental justice groups across the Americas, IEN expressed its direct connection with environmental justice, but also defined itself as a distinctively indigenous body with a specific mission. The organization put forth an Environmental Code of Ethics in 1991 (the same year it participated in the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit). This code demonstrates the link across self-determination, environmental concerns, and civil rights:

- As Indigenous Peoples, we speak for ourselves, no one else is authorized to speak on our behalf. Environmental groups have no right to represent Indigenous People. We represent ourselves.
- We will always stand by the strongest position in defense of Traditional Natural Law.
- We will support Indigenous People's rights to self-determination.
- We will not make accommodations for, or deals with, polluters.
- We support basic principles of environmental justice, including the rights of people to a clean environment regardless of race, economic position, gender, or national identity. Violations of environmental justice we understand to be violations of International Law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.  

http://www.ienearth.org/ienprin.html
The Environmental Code of Ethics brings together cultural belief, practice, and identity with political rights. It positions eco-justice in the center of broader cultural definition and a specific environmental stance. It not only makes deliberate connections between environmental practice and subjectivity, but it emphasizes this connection as central to their particular ethics; thus, in an environmental doctrine, we find statements of voice, representation and identity characteristics like “race, economic position, gender or national identity.” In beginning with a declaration of self-determined voice, the Code defines an ethics that is as much about indigenous identity and a self-generated narrative as it is about environmental resource use.

The particular way in which environmental racism is experienced in native communities and the way in which these communities approach environmental justice highlight the special role of narrative in articulating protest and in giving definition to a complicated set of political and cultural rights. There is an essential place for the novel/fiction writing in this structure. Julie Sze argues that “literature offers a significant tool… [T]hrough its testing of the boundaries of realism and temporality, [literature] is not a route of escapism from the lived experiences of environmental racism in the contemporary moment. Rather, environmental justice needs literature to better understand why and how the exploitation of people of color, women, and the environment are linked, historically and systematically” (173). Sze contends that literature is useful in providing “a new way of looking at environmental justice through visual images and metaphors not solely through the prism of statistics. This new way of
looking references the ‘real’ problems of communities struggling… and is simultaneously liberated from providing a strictly documentary account of the contemporary world. It allows for a more flexible representation of environmental justice…” (163).

Conceptually, Sze’s argument for the place of literary writing in environmental justice makes sense – literary narrative can supplement the kinds of knowledge and documentation that give public official definition to lived conditions. However, the “real life” dimensions of this connection between environmental justice (something that happens in a legal, political arena) and literary writing (something that happens on the page) is hazy. The question of how the literary’s alternative elements ultimately have concrete, real life consequences remains unanswered. There is a way, in my understanding, to bring together the theories of Ecocriticism and those of Native American Studies to begin to answer this line of questioning and to move beyond a face value assumption that personal and mythological storytelling is simply essentially good.

Mei Mei Evans tries to distinguish between a “personal” narrative provided by “those speaking from ‘ground zero’ of the environmental justice movement” and something presumably produced outside of the personal: “Personal testimonies have been the lifeblood of the environmental justice movement, bearing witness s they do to the material effects of policy-making, not on the corporation’s or the government’s bottom line, but on human lives. These witnessings, in other words, are not abstractions or analyses; rather, they are the chronicle of the consequences of environmental injustice” (29). Evans reads personal testimony as significant in part because it is not “analyses.” This suggestion that the personal “witnessings” somehow work outside of “analyses,”
my estimation, misses the precise political purpose of it. There is a danger, I believe, in marking such a detachment of narrative of one’s lived experience from an analytical mode. Were narratives of this sort to be devoid of analyses, they would not have emerged, would not have been used in courts of law (see my earlier discussion on the appeal to *Ammoneta et al v. Tennessee Valley Authority*) and ultimately, might not provide the counterpolitics that I imagine. My sense is that such a narrative – one that speaks to the lived experience – is a form of analysis done differently. In the second half of this chapter, I want to explore how this narrative functions in laying out more than just a personal account. There is much to these narratives than the romance of one’s individual lived experience. If we begin to look at the ways these narratives both resist and produce analysis, I believe we can then begin to see the kinds of political critique they can provide in terms of “real life” environmental justice. It is probably somewhat easier or clearer to imagine the ways non-fictional forms of cultural production act as a political tool. However, I’ll turn to a discussion of two novels now to model how story certainly enables a “new way of looking,” like Sze argues, but it also is a new way of *doing*. That is, literary writing – and here fiction in particular – becomes more than a representation of environmental justice; it is also an act(ion).

Barbara Christian’s point that literature is a way of “doing theory in another mode” is relevant here, but I also am suggesting something else. The stories that emerge – these acts of resistant articulation – are deeply intertwined with the material conditions of environmental inequities, the effects of the misuse of natural resources on people’s health and the ability to continue living one’s cultural lifeways. What is at stake in these
stories are lives and bodies put at grave risk. Between the page and real life are material conditions and the practice of giving story, particularly for indigenous peoples, becomes an act of sustenance. Sean Kiccumah Teuton argues that “Native sacred sites are such not only because ancient cultural events transpired on them, but also because stories of those places continue to guide moral behavior and sustain culture” (47). Teuton points out here how story is profoundly more complex than a limited fictional tale; rather, it is simultaneously and interrelatedly a vehicle for a land ethic and for the preservation of culture. For him, since story is a primary way “to preserve a cultural identity,” it is absolutely essential that “tribal peoples must dwell within the edifying features of their ancestral geography” where these stories were born. (51). This critical connection between identity and a land site challenges the assimilationist version of an eco-identity throughout the 20th century that I have been showing. “To displace Native people to unknown lands is... an attempt to destroy them...,” Teuton argues (51). Imagine, then, the urgency behind the stories that emerge from very “real” material struggles over resources, land ownership, and ethics. If, as Teuton claims, “they risk disintegration” if “denied their homelands,” then the writers of environmental justice narratives are invested not in the flattening of political rights that happens in the eco-assimilationist version of the identity/land link, but in the very practice of those rights in demanding physical, political, and cultural well-being.

Linda Hogan’s novel Solar Storms (1995) demonstrates, on a broad level, the significance of the novel as an element of environmental justice activism. Solar Storms novelizes the nuanced dimensions of environmental activism as a tremendously charged
personal/individual, familial, communal (both tribal and pan-tribal), and cultural act of social and political resistance and survival. Hogan describes *Solar Storms* as a “legal-ecological novel,” indicating that the novel is invested in how story can speak to the intricate connections between legalities and ecologies (qtd. Cook 15). Angel Irons, the main character, tells us at the start of the novel that there are latent “questions” and a language inside her, “…things not yet come to words” (25). The novel tracks her journey into those “words,” modeling on a broader scale the struggle to give voice and narrative to the lived experience of both environmental and cultural violences. Hogan shows the deeply rooted difficulty and necessity of bringing language to this experience. In doing just that – bringing an intimate personal and communal language and voice to the public fight - the novel gives story to the political sentiment of “we speak for ourselves.”

Hogan based *Solar Storms* on the battle between northern communities of Cree, Inuit, and mixed-blood Indians against Hydro-Quebec in the Boundary Waters between Minnesota and Canada. The James Bay-Great Whale hydroelectric project (the largest one in the world) was launched in 1971 to provide electricity for New York City. Although native communities had lived in the James Bay region for thousands of years, they were not consulted prior to the development, and the project had tremendous effects on both their wellbeing and the welfare of the area’s ecosystem. Colin G. Calloway explains some of this devastation:

People were relocated to make way for dams that flooded ancient hunting territories and sacred places. Migrating birds found nowhere to land. A sudden release of water from one reservoir drowned ten thousand migrating caribou in
Many Crees experienced nimass aksiwin or ‘fish disease’ – methyl mercury poisoning. The drowned plants and trees decomposed, releasing methane, which converts inorganic mercury present naturally in the soil to methylmercury, a lethal poison. Fish obtain methylmercury through the water that passes through their gills as well as through the food chain. It accumulates in their fatty tissues and muscles and becomes part of the diet of people who live on fish…Alcoholism, violence, crime, and suicide rose dramatically” (488-489).

When Phase I of the project was completed in 1985 (unhindered by court battles), the Crees expanded their resistance as Phase II began, garnering support from non-natives in both Canada and the United States. As protest mounted, Governor Mario Cuomo canceled the contract for power in 1992, and the new premier of Quebec eventually shelved Phase II of the James Bay project in 1994. As Solar Storms fictionalizes this historical account, it draws attention to the vast effects of the project on people and land, and it highlights the significance of environmental activism in struggles for cultural survival.

In terms of national and geographical boundaries, the James Bay hydroelectric project was rooted primarily in Canada rather than in the U.S. I recognize that there is an historical, legal and political framework of this analysis for Canadian “first peoples,” one which my project cannot thoroughly engage. However, both the struggle for environmental justice in the social, political, and legal arena and Hogan’s fictionalized version of this struggle show them as inextricably intertwined with the U.S. as well. Although I recognize that there differences in the Canadian context that are beyond the scope of this project, I want to insist that a reading of this novel and the real life politics on which it is based very much belongs in an analysis of the U.S.-centered narratives of resistance as well. The hydro-electric project links the separate nations of Canada and
the U.S. by way of the actual, geo-physical connection of their water use. It also points to a mutual-complicity in the effects such a project had on the environment and lifeways of indigenous peoples. As Hogan novelizes it, the resistance to this project and the fight for justice emphatically cross lines of affiliation, taking the characters (and readers) back and forth across geographical, cultural, and national boundaries of indigenous nations, Minnesota/U.S. and Canada. An ecocritical practice that engages questions of environmental racism and (in)justice needs to allow for this border crossing in analysis as well. If not, its turn away from a novel like Solar Storms mirrors the political negligence towards indigenous communities who, as Rachel Stein notes, “are forcibly relocated to Shanty towns of Quonset huts and shacks at the edges of a ruined world” (199).21

We are introduced to the town of Adam’s Rib, Minnesota as Angel Irons returns to it in 1972 to be reunited with her family (particularly to meet her mother, Hannah Wing). Angel, like the “split open” waters she crosses to arrive in Adam’s Rib, bares many “scars,” from the physical marks across her face to deeply rooted emotional and psychological wounds of abuse and abandonment. Angel’s personal experience of self-

21 Joni Adamson also notes the relevance of borderland environments in environmental justice fiction. Speaking specifically of Leslie Marmon Silko’s work, Adamson argues, “…Ceremony and Almanac of the Dead are not set in the ‘pristine wilderness areas’ celebrated by many mainstream American environmentalists and nature writers. They are set on reservations, in open-pit uranium mines and in national and international borderlands. These novels question and confront our most popular assumptions about ‘nature’ and ‘nature writing’ by inviting us to take a hard look at the contested terrains where poor and marginalized people are organizing around interrelated social and environmental problems” (xvii). And Although Adamson does not mention Silko’s book Storyteller, it is interesting to note that the short story included in it (of the same title and published prior to the book) is set in Alaska where, Silko makes explicitly clear the drilling for oil and the sexual abuse of the female character are similar acts of imperial violence. Although Alaska is, of course, part of the U.S. it still is a geographically marginalized land space in which these dramas of eco and human violence seem to be consistently set in these pieces of Native American fiction.
acceptance and her journey from isolation into becoming a member of a family and of a community mirrors the broader communal experience of mounting resistance to the dam project.

Shortly after Angel arrives in Adam’s Rib, two men arrive in a canoe bearing the news that a dam project has been underway in the north. One of the men summarizes the struggle over the land and the potential dire effects of such a development, and Angel immediately understands herself in relation to this destruction:

In the first flooding… they’d killed many thousands of caribou and flooded land the people lived on and revered. Agents of the government insisted the people had no legal right to the land. No agreement had ever been signed, he said, no compensation offered. Even if it had been offered, the people would not have sold their lives. Not one of them…. These men’s people, my own people, too, had lived there forever, for more than ten thousand years, and had been sustained by these lands that were now being called empty and useless. If the dam project continued, the lives of the people who lived there would cease to be, a way of life would end in another act of displacement and betrayal. (58)

In this understanding, the dam project is a complex mix of ecological, cultural, and legal problems. This conflict is more than a big debate over a little fish called the snail darter that we saw above, but a conflict over human, cultural, and ecological survival – directly stated, “the lives of the people who lived there would cease to be” if the lands are flooded for reservoirs. From the outset, the novel fuses the eco and the cultural, and it puts ecological destruction and its direct and particular effects on native communities in line with a long history of violences. The novel reiterates the sentiment that there are “old roots of these new events,” and it clearly calls the reader to see these historical abuses done to people’s bodies, to land and animals, and to native cultures and rights as intricately linked throughout time (301).
Angel is part of a long chain of abused women, beginning with her biological grandmother, Loretta Wing who was:

from the Elk Islanders, the people who became so hungry they ate the poisoned carcasses of deer that the settlers left out for the wolves. The starving people ate bait...The curse on that poor girl’s life came from watching the desperate people of her tribe die... when she was still a girl, she’d been taken and used by men who fed her and beat her and forced her. That was how one day she became the one who hurt others. It was passed down. I could almost hear their voices when she talked, babbling behind hers, men’s voices speaking English. Something scary lived behind her voice. (38-39)

The daughter Lorretta abandons, Hannah, bears the marks of such violence as well:

“...her skin was a garment of scars. There were burns and incisions. Like someone had written on her. The signature of torturers, I call them now...And farther in...there were violations and invasions of other kinds” (99). The community fears Hannah (as haunted and evil), but Bush explains Hannah’s extreme strangeness and potential danger as rooted in a history of colonial violence: “I saw it in time, her life going backward to where time and history and genocide gather and move like a cloud above the spilled oceans of blood. That little girl’s body was the place where all this met...[S]he was the sum total of ledger books and laws. Some of her ancestors walked out of death, out of massacre. Some of them come from the long trail of dying, people sent from their world, and she was also the child of those starving and poisoned people on Elk Island” (101). The historical narrative written out on her body marks Hannah as the bearer of centuries of violence, and she enacts this violence on her own infant daughter, Angel, in a horrid act of cannibalism. Hannah’s biting at Angel’s face leaves significant scarring, and it is a story of brutality (and an explanation of her physical characteristics) that Angel painfully seeks
out and eventually learns during her journey. She sees herself in line with this familial and cultural history: “I wanted an unbroken line between me and the past. I wanted not to be fragments and pieces left behind by fur traders, soldiers, priests, and schools” (77). Angel positions herself in a long chain of dominators with whom her story is connected and with whom or which institutions the eco-violences of the novel are inextricably connected.

The physical violence that is carried through generations of native ancestors, particularly in women in this novel, is mirrored repeatedly in the destruction of the land and culture. “‘The people….truly were under assault,’” one inhabitant explains. “‘Above us and to the east, trees were being felled, the coal stripped away, and roads had been cut into every sacred site the people had grown from, known, and told stories about’…There were logging machines, she told us, with monstrous jaws that ripped trees out of the ground and threw them away as if they were already the toothpicks they would become” (295). The chopping of trees, mining of coal, and construction of streets are processes undertaken by “monstrous jaws,” an eco-cannibalism that victimizes ecological entities, “sacred” culture, and even the stories told about these places and exchanges. Angel makes this eco-cannibalism explicit when she thinks, “[N]ow I know it was a story of people eating, as toothy and sharp and hungry as the cannibal clan was said to be – eating land, eating people, eating tomorrow” (303). Just as Hogan shows how these forces are linked, she carefully depicts the practices of native resistance that exist prior to or arise in response to them. On a very broad level, this resistance is imbedded in maintaining a system of environmentalist thought, belief and cultural practice dissonant
from that of the colonial system. But this also is the constant source of conflict and
disempowerment for indigenous peoples, as Angel recognizes: “[W]hen the officials and
attorneys spoke, their language didn’t hold a thought for the life of water, or a regard for
the land that sustained people from the beginning of time. They didn’t remember the
sacred treaties between humans and animals. Our words were powerless beside their
figures, their measurements and ledgers. For the builders it was easy and clear-cut.
They saw it only on the flat, two-dimensional world of paper” (emphasis mine 279). The
novel depicts a more specific and calculated set of practices generated around these eco-
cultural conflicts, “giv[ing] power” to the narratives and practices that emerge to
articulate and enact resistance to a linked ecological and cultural ruin. The “two
dimensional” and “flat” qualities of the builders’ “paper” becomes three dimensional and
newly alive when stories of resistance come to be voiced.

_Solar Storms_ shifts into a story of resistance after the two men arrive in Adam’s
Rib with the news of the dam project. Angel, her grandmother Bush, her great-
greatmother Agnes, and her great-great grandmother Dora-Rouge make preparation for
and depart on a long and difficult voyage by canoe to the land of the “Fat-
Eaters.” Although each woman has a different personal mission, they are motivated in union to go
to the site of impending destruction as a means to join their people in a struggle.22 “For
my people,” Angel poignantly declares, “the problem has always been this: that the only
possibility of survival has been resistance. Not to strike back has meant certain loss and

22 The women’s journey at this moment, sparked by the dam issue, helps confirm Barbara Cook’s
argument: “…rather than a strictly ecofeminist text, _Solar Storms_ reflects concerns most expressed by the
multicultural activists of the environmental justice movement” (46).
death. To strike back has also meant loss and death, only with a fighting chance” (325). The personal life/death struggles that each character experiences during the novel, particularly during this voyage to the north, are carefully intertwined with a broader survival of ecological spaces and beings, of a specific environmentalist sentiment, and of native cultures. This connection models what Claudia Kuletz explains as “an ecological ethos to the material conditions of survival” (209).

The abundance of plants in the novel demonstrates the convergence of environmentalist sentiment and cultural “survival.” The metaphorical and literal presence of green things in the book echoes what we have seen in texts for decades to a certain extent, as I have been showing throughout my project, but it also puts forth an emphatically revised eco-narrative. Angel comes to realize quickly that she has a charged relationship with plants as a “plant dreamer” who dreams of rare plants and understands their medicinal qualities. While this explicit connection between the Native American and plants might seem like the usual primitivizing connection between the Indian and the ecological world, it is vastly different in this novel. Angel’s special connection with the green world becomes a means to connect with her family and culture – it is an integral part of her being able to claim a place among “my people” and to recognize these particular lands as a homeland, both of which are central to her development out of self-loathing into self-acceptance.

Like her great-great grandmother Dora-Rouge and Dora-Rouge’s mother Ek who was an herb woman, Angel begins to dream of plants and their uses once she settles in at
Adam’s Rib. Hogan links this skill to a genealogy and history and underscores its importance in an ecological-human connection necessary for “survival”:

Field, forest, swamp. I knew how they breathed at night, and that they were linked to us in that breath. It was the oldest bond of survival. I was devoted to woods the wind walked through, to mosses and lichens… I remembered things I’d forgotten, how a hundred years ago, leaves reached toward sunlight, plants bent into currents of water… In this way, the plants and I joined each other. They entangled me in their stems and vines and it was a beautiful entanglement. (emphases mine 171)

This union of plant and person allows Angel to connect with a history that reaches much further back than even the colonial violences of which she and her ancestors bear physical reminders. Her connection with plants (and with her ancestors who were also in tune with plants in this same way) links her to a time that existed prior to the ecological and cultural destruction traced throughout the novel. On the one hand, the act of plant dreaming and the practices that develop out of it are resistant to these violences – they persist throughout generations as a cultural and environmentalist system of thought and practice that work in opposition to the forms of destruction these human and land communities experience. On the other hand, this type of thought and practice is precisely what the novel shows to be at risk. Should the land be flooded for reservoirs, these plants would be drowned (and potentially become poison-producing), and plant-dreaming would become solely a project of remembrance, no longer an ecological memory that allows for action.

Angel’s expanding “remember[ing]” of a fertile plant world changes her on a personal level, and it changes her perspective and role in the struggle to stop the hydroelectric project. She learns from Tulik, an elder, the practice of locating and
harvesting plants: “Some of the plants we would cut. Others had to be pulled by the roots, but only if there were enough left to survive. Each had its own requirements. We were careful, timid even, touching a plant lightly, speaking with it, Tulik singing, because each plant had its own song” (260). This practice of the plant dreamer is essential to the welfare of the tribe: “Each of us had one part of the work of the living...Everyone had a gift, each person a specialty of one kind or another...All of us together formed something like a single organism. We needed and helped one another” (262). Angel’s realization of her essential role in a web of interconnected lives not only fuels her interest in plant knowledge and harvesting, but it also helps her develop an understanding of the issues at hand in the dam project.

The novel is clear about the profound effects of the development on native peoples and the land (based very closely, as we can see, on the actual experience at James Bay):

That year, there would be no fishing camp because the fish were contaminated from the damming of water and mercury had been released from the stones and rotting vegetation. Then a surge of water flooded the once-fertile plains. Because of the early thaw and new roads that crossed the migration routes of animals, spring camp that next year would not be fruitful, and people were already worried about food. The waterfowl that ate in the water and ate from its bottom were also becoming sick. Many of them were listless and thirsty before they finally died. If development continued, there would be no drinking water left. (274)

This destruction is vast, but the persistence of Angel’s dreams and the honing of her plant-harvesting practice within such destruction offer a promise of continuity, or at least the fight for continuity. While ecological systems and human communities are broken down by this development, Hogan continues to highlight the survival of the natural
world, primarily in terms of human action and attempted sustenance of it. The natural world persists in the lives of the characters and in the language of the book despite this flooding, contamination, disease, death, and diminishment of natural resources like water.

Hogan’s use of an eco-language forges an elegant link between the community’s work to resist the dam project and the ecological quality of land. As Angel becomes deeply engaged in active resistance to the project, she describes her indignation in simple eco-terms: “The anger inside me grew a new stem…” (289-90). Hogan uses the language of plants to explain Angel’s growing investment in social eco-justice. Like a plant rooting itself, the investment in this community and its rights to survive grows stronger. Hogan continues to make this connection as the communal resistance to the project mounts: “Even with a few dissenters, we were a field of rich soil, growing. Once we started our act of defiance, we couldn’t quit. As certain as it was that the bulldozers would move earth, it was equally certain that we would stand in their way” (emphasis 314). Describing the community of “dissenters” as “rich soil, growing,” Hogan revises the turn of the century rhetoric of natural nativeness by charging a connection between indigenous peoples and soil with a fertile activism. The naturalizing discourse of eco-indigeneity that we saw decades earlier (even up through the seventies in the Crying Indian commercial) is replaced by an indigeneity linked to the ecological world through resistance work.

The eco-language in the novel also defines Angel’s connection to her family: “Dora-Rouge, I think now, was a root and we were like a tree family, aspens or birch, connected to one another underground, the older trees feeding the young, sending off
shoots, growing. I watched and listened. It was an old world in which I began to bloom. Their stories called me home…” (48). This genealogy links Angel not only to a line of human ancestors, but also to an environmentalist sensibility and a collection of narratives imbedded within it. Decades earlier, Zitkala-Sa also used an ecological narrative of genealogy, and while her writing imagined the native as a natural, organic entity (much like the rhetoric of her time), it also used this rhetorical connection to depict cultural violence done to American Indians. Here, almost a century after Zitkala-Sa was writing, Hogan’s novel brings this particular eco-discourse to fruition in a moment when the political connection between environmentalist sensibility and policy and indigenous civil rights has been given new public attention.

Angel’s “bloom[ing]” within this family line relies upon “stories,” and just like Angel’s development, the novel itself is laden with multiple narratives that further solidify the link between the ecological world, the human cultural world, and political activism. Newspaper stories become a significant force in Angel’s personal experience and in the shared activism. This forum comes to signify the tension between the public record (the officially-recognized narrative) and narratives of indigenous struggle and resistance. When Angel’s mother, Hannah, dies, Angel and Bush wrap her body in newspaper: “How appropriate it was to place her on words of war, obituaries, stories of carnage and misery, and true stories that had been changed to lies. It seemed like the right bed for her. Some of the words stuck to her body, dark ink, but we did not wash them off; it was a suitable skin” (253). As the culmination of colonial violences, Hannah’s body bears the scars of torture in life, and the stories written out on that scarred
skin in her death make clear the connection between such violences and the official stories told about them.

Hogan presents the differences in stories, particularly in the public stories circulated in newspapers: “The nomadic people...It was a sad thing for them to see a forest turned into rubble and stump, the land stripped of game...There were stories for everything, they said. But not for this. We needed a story for what was happening to us now, as if a story would guide us. Oh, there were stories all right, like those in The Greater River News, about how we ‘Occupied’ Two-Town Post, as if we’d stolen it and taken it over by force, as if we were soldiers who knew what we were doing. How quickly we became the enemy...” (302). There is a deep divide between the need for a story and language to narrate the experience of “a forest turned into rubble and stump, the land stripped of game” and the stories appearing in papers that define the indigenous protesters as “soldiers” and “the enemy.” As Craig S. Womack argues in Red on Red: “Radical Native viewpoints, voices of difference rather than commonality, are called for to disrupt the powers of the literary status quo as well as the powers of the state – there is a link between thought and activism, surely” (5). The community’s “need” to produce a “story for what was happening to [them] now” is a need to counteract the “words of war, obituaries, stories of carnage and misery... [and] lies,” a form of both literary and political “disruption,” as Womack states.

Bush takes up her pen and her camera in a mission to put her story into circulation – one that shows the destruction of peoples and lands, one about the violation of their rights. In photographing “the devastation...the dead caribou, the houses with water
lapping against the walls” (294) and writing from their perspective, Bush dedicates herself “to tell[ing] the world what happened” (289). In her most poignant story and photographs, her “sad and tragic documents” record “Miss Nett crying and trying to get the men to stop [flooding her territory], her arms held out wide as if she could keep the men from passing through them…Bush had taken one picture of Miss Nett collapsed on the ground, holding it as if to protect it…the man turned away from her and looking toward the camera. He was gesturing with his hand for Bush to stop, his sharp, world-eating teeth visible, a pitiful old woman in the foreground” (307-308). Like illegal substances, Bush’s stories have to be “smuggled out” (308). Her work shows the need for a different narrative – one that allows for visibility – and it shows the potency of such a narrative to galvanize people (as protest leaders travel to join them in their fight). Bush’s visual and written narratives forge space in the public record for the stories of indigenous people, and these are specifically stories of environmental justice. In addition to inserting what Womack calls a “Native viewpoint” into the larger narrative, Bush’s stories and her fervor in producing them model what Womack explains as “…we are not mere victims but active agents in history, innovators of new ways, of Indian ways, of thinking and being and speaking and authority in this world created by colonial contact” (6). Hogan’s novelization of the import of this (photo)journalism demonstrates how the fictional form, too, has a crucial role to play in both producing and circulating these stories of resistance.

Bush’s kind of narrative, made public on a broad scale, is put in line with many other kinds of narratives in the novel, both personal and communal – the stories of
family, the stories of the American Indian Movement (happening parallel to their movement), the stories beavers map onto the land, the stories of historical Indian leaders like Geronimo, and the traditional stories of wolverine. Together, they define the intricacies of the eco-cultural connection with political activism, and they demonstrate how “survival” is a complex notion and practice. These stories exist in opposition to rigid mapping systems which Angel realizes early on is a limited form of narrative, one that she connects with colonization:

I was intrigued by the fact that history could be told by looking at paper… They were incredible topographies, the territories and tricks and lies of history. But of course they were not true, they were not the people or animal lives or the clay of land, the water, the carnage. They didn’t tell those parts of the story. What I liked was that land refused to be shaped by the makers of maps. Land had its own will. The cartographers thought if they mapped it, everything would remain the same, but it didn’t, and I respected it for that…It was a defiant land…Its wildness, its stubborn passion to remain outside their [“the government surveyors”] sense of order made them want it ever more. (emphasis mine 123)

Again, the “flat, two dimensional world of paper” cannot comprehend or articulate the complex interworkings of human and ecological connections. This mapping and the “incredible topographies” it produces are false (“tricks and lies… they were not true”). The life of the land and the history of ecological and human violence on it are absent in this kind of map. It is precisely from within this absence that Angel imagines the land itself to resist. The “defiance” of land, its “wildness” and “insistence on remaining outside” of these official narratives of “orders” allows for and leads to the need for a different kind of narrative to mark the presence of and to express the needs of these outlying entities. These stories pick up where the official maps leave off. That is, Hogan
imagines stories as emerging from a place of resistance and as a vehicle for articulating that resistance. Unlike maps, this passage suggests that stories allow for – and are even created out of – a defiant nature. This personification of the ecological world as an active agent (of resistance) seems a fictional version of Christopher D. Stone’s proposal that natural entities are rights-bearing subjects. Although it cannot demand political rights, the natural world of the novel has the innate capacity to resist. In its refusal to take or keep the shape that cartographers mark, in asserting “its own will,” the lad of the novel lays the foundation for activist resistance on the part of human beings whose lives are interdependent on it. Solar Storms offers such stories that resist restrictive mapping, stories that generate what Kuletz describes as an “alternative narrative map” (212).

Kuletz’s example is of the pamphlet that the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe puts out to describe the “Living Valley,” using Indian place names and describing it as a fertile area in contrast to Euroamerican stories of a “hellish” “pioneer environment.” Native stories, Kuletz argues, “depict an alternative landscape…[and they] describe movement through the landscape” (207).

Solar Storms novelizes this alternative landscape. Prior to her canoe voyage (and prior to her chronicles of the resistance that I discuss above), Bush puts her energy into two things – reconstructing the skeleton of animals and studying ancient maps: “Obsessed with the faded squares of paper that represented land, she tried to unravel all earth’s secrets. I saw that she searched for something not yet charted. Besides… the maps were not reliable” (122). As they travel, the women find the terrain different from these mapped versions of it, and the maps eventually fall apart, disintegrating into
fragments. Their narratives of the land over which they travel – particularly Angel’s plant dreaming which begins on the voyage – take precedent, offer guidance and direction, and begin to formulate what we can understand as an “alternative map.” Their stories ultimately come to articulate a more precise vision and a picture of resistance that the maps cannot do; the maps physically disintegrate under the weight of their voyage across the “Hungry Mouth of Water.”

The physical journey they undertake is an essential element to this new narrative – it literalizes the “movement through landscape” that Kuletz notes as a main characteristic of the alternative map. The voyages in the novel (Angel travels to Adam’s Rib and the Fur Island, the women travel to Fat-Eaters’ territory, the convergence of protesters in the territory, and then the women’s return to Adam’s Rib) offer stories that illustrate Fox and Starn’s point that “protest moves with people across borders” (9). Travel is a necessary element in Angel’s experience of formulating her personal narrative and, on a broader level, in organizing the communal protest of the development. Angel explains the process of healing as a physical act of movement: “I had no choice but to imagine myself, along with the parts and fragments of stories, as if it all was part of a great brokenness moving, trying to move, toward wholeness – a leg, an arm, a putting together, the way Bush put together the animal bones” (85). She equates her move out of personal, familial and communal fragmentation and toward wholeness with both a coming together of fragmented stories and a fusing of dismembered body parts.

While the map falls into fragments during the voyage, Angel moves towards a sealing of fragments, fixing a “brokenness.” The false and fixed account disintegrates in
the face of an unfixed exploration of the land and the self that Angel undertakes. This link across personal experience, the story, and the body – an association lodged within a quest for sociocultural and political justice (their trip to aid the Fat-Eaters) – reflects central issues in broader environmental justice narratives. That is, what environmental justice advocates draw attention to is local experience and the physical impacts on bodies/public health, and they emphasize the need for the visibility of these stories as a means for change. These intertwined elements in Angel’s personal development and the growing protest movement in the Two-Town area models Fox and Starn’s argument that “…social protest should be understood as a process of becoming rather than an already achieved state” (emphasis mine 6). Hogan portrays this ongoing process, like Bush’s work on animal bones, as one of assemblage, and the form her novel takes models this lesson as well. In terms of plot, she assembles women across generations as well as multiple tribes in a pan-Indian protest, and in terms of form, she not only uses various kinds of narratives but also inserts two recurrent themes in the novel – plant images and creation stories.

As Angel dreams of plants, the novel depicts her sketched images of them, allowing the reader to see these plants as well. And when the women arrive in the north, we see Ek’s book for the first time along with Angel, a book made out of birch bark that includes diagrams of plants with parts marked for healing qualities as well as symbols to indicate what time of the day the plants could be gathered. As these plants are endangered by the development and Ek’s book is destroyed by flooding, their inclusion in the novel is imperative in providing sustained visibility to the ecological world (and its
link to human beings). Their inclusion also suggests that the ecological world has a place in a bigger narrative, that these images of ecological entities tell necessary parts of the stories unfolding in the novel. The reader of Solar Storms sees a book within a book in this image. The story of this interior book (encapsulated by the story/ies of the novel) is told by plants. The pictures of plantlife stand in for spoken and written language. This collapse of the written word and the plant image highlights how the novel insists on the special significance of storytelling – the stories that emerge from within these places of resistance are told by both the ecological world itself and the human beings whose survival is dependant upon the survival of such plantlife. Just as generating these stories is crucial, so too is hearing them.

Similar to the way Angel learns that each member of the community plays an essential role, each element of the novel has a necessary part to play in revising the way we can understand the connection between the environmental and the human and the role of resistance in reassembling this equation. Hogan is deliberate about her use of the literary form, particularly fiction, for this purpose: “I can talk of the issues, political issue, or a tribe that is being devastated because of development, or land that’s being devastated because of development – and I put it into a story, it has more of an impact. People read it and they get it because it’s not a political diatribe…they see a story from inside their own body, inside their own selves, instead of hearing about it and going back to their daily lives” (Qtd. Cook 2). The novelization of eco-destruction, environmental justice and protest, for Hogan, is a powerful way to inspire activism outside of the novel. Fictionalizing these legal and cultural battles also becomes a means to demonstrate that
“tribal life will continue in the future” (Womack 6). While Angel’s experience as a plant-dreamer allows her to connect with pre-colonized history – to “remember” things she can know only through a matriarchal genealogy of plant readers – the potential for plant knowledge to continue is put at risk by the hydroelectric development project. Resistance – physical and literary – challenges the trend of submerging plantlife communities and cultures that rely on such plantlife into an extinct past. Angel’s ecological memory is threatened by violences – the same ones that destroyed Ek’s book – of becoming solely a project of memory. By collecting stories in Solar Storm, Hogan, along with her characters, demands that indigenous peoples and the ecological world will persist into the future. Ek’s book may have drowned, but it continues to be remembered, used and seen through her ancestors and through Hogan’s readers. The novel seems deeply invested in laying out that future: “On the little island were seeds, grains and grasses, nests and eggs…Ammah’s Island was a place of hope and beauty and no one was permitted to walk there. Never could we put a foot down on it. No person could trample hope, could violate the future” (265).

Along with Angel’s journey into self-acceptance and social protest, the novel also tells a broad creation narrative that mirrors these ongoing processes. Angel identifies a “longing for creation” in her personal growth: “I had been empty space, and now I was finding a language, a story, to shape myself by” (94). Self-creation is a process of narration here, and Hogan is careful to connect this personal experience with a broader one as well: “Creation, according to Dora-Rouge, was an ongoing thing. On the eighth day of creation, Dora-Rouge had told me, human beings were given their place with the
earth…‘Then, on the ninth day was the creation of stories, and these had many uses.’

They taught a thing to two about kindness and love” (emphases mine 181). Stories, like
the parts of the earth, human beings, and all creatures (including even a day designated to
“snails and slugs, night crawlers and silverfish, roaches”), have an important place in the
ongoing process of creation. This version of creation directly revises the Christian story
that tells of a finite six days of creation, with a seventh for rest. By including stories as
one of the created entities (which the Christian version does not), Hogan points to the
relevance of the story in human and ecological livelihood.

The novel carries the creation story throughout, alluding to the Christian story of
Noah’s ark and the flood as well. When the surviving women return to Adam’s Rib, they
find it much changed. As a result of Phase I of the flooding up north, one of the rivers
that emptied into Lake Grand had submerged parts of the town. Angel describes her re-
entry into Adam’s Rib: “Beginnings, I know now, are everything. And when Bush and I
returned to Adam’s Rib, I knew we walked into another day of creation, a beginning”
(334). But this new beginning is marked by the destruction: “In this flood, there would
be no animals escaping two by two” (335). While Noah could rescue animals two by
two, allowing for regeneration of the animal and human world, the flooding at Adam’s
Rib poignantly demonstrates how ecological and cultural violence stunts the capacity for
a fertile world. The novel does offer hope, though, both in the way it presents the
political resistance to these environmental and cultural changes, and in its emphatic
return to eco-language at the conclusion. When Angel finds Dora-Rouge on the cusp of
death, she describes the scene in a synthesis of eco and human terms: “I found her on a
bed of moss just off a path in the remaining forest. Although she was white-haired and withered, she was curled up like an infant waiting to be born…She died easily, soft as a leaf falling from a tree that knew new leaves, branches, and roots would unfold, a tree that had the power of its belief that spring would one day come” (348-349). The destructive forces of the flooding are countered by this combined image of infancy and a growing tree (seeding via its falling leaves). The moment of death provides a promise of ecological and cultural recreation here rather than the victory of destructive forces. Angel emphasizes this fertility when she looks to the sky: “…[I]t reminds me of the lines across a pregnant woman’s belly. It leaves me thinking that maybe our earth, our sky, will give birth to something, perhaps there’s still another day of creation” (349). The birthing of new creation again emphasizes an ongoingness that brings together the ecological, the human, stories, and acts of protest that attempt to sustain these things and keep them connected. Lauren Berlant, in her chapter “America, ‘Fat,’ the Fetus,” argues that the image of the pregnant woman becomes a “vehicle for the production of national culture” (87). However, Angel’s imagining of infancy and rebirth in the moment of death and her seeing the sky as a pregnant belly stretching to fit a growing new life ultimately resist the reproduction of an oppressive national culture that enacts ecological destruction and social injustice. Instead, the promise of a future life beyond this moment of death and conclusion works outside of these restraints, and it suggests that the protest (in thought, practice, and culture) that Angel, her family, and tribes have been enacting will continue beyond the confines of their finite lives, the novel’s finite pages and the seemingly finite lines of national membership.
Angel’s own life is recreated through the novel – she begins as a lost, isolated foster child in search of her family, and by its end she is united with a tribal community and, most closely, with Tommy and her half-sister whom she adopts as a daughter, Aurora. While it is a new beginning for her, she also attaches this beginning directly to her past: “I believed Tommy and I were our ancestors reunited in their search for each other and we loved deeply” (350). She not only connects her new life to a human, familial past, but also to an animal and ecological one: “Inside ourselves we are not yet upright walkers. We are tree. We are frog in amber. Maybe earth itself is just now starting to form” (350-351). Angel’s imagining of an ecological and animal re-creation in line with her personal one enables the conclusion of the novel to remain open, modeling both Hogan’s concept of ongoing creation story and Fox and Starn’s concept of protest as “a process of becoming.” The resistances in the novel are highlighted here not only to be a political act of organized protest (a movement against the dam) which had a definite conclusion, but also a continued dissonance in ecological and cultural systems of thought, belief, and practice. Both the act of organized protest and the conceptual demand a visibility of the way identity, voice and land (more specifically resource management) have been joined. After a century of this connection being implicit in environmental discourse and oppressive in its assimilative sentiments, when revised through the force of both the form of literary writing and environmental justice, this connection instead begins to help in articulating a political identity.
V. “Seeds are like language…”: Ruth Ozeki’s *All Over Creation*

Ruth Ozeki’s novel, *All Over Creation* (2003) deals with a different concern from that of *Solar Storms*—primarily the issue of genetically engineered food products—and, while it deals with race issues, it is not focused on indigenous peoples as is Hogan’s novel. Yet, both texts imagine stories about lives, lands, families, histories, foods, plants, and migrations as procreative—“seed”—and, as such, necessary sites of local activist possibility. Reading them together, I suggest, shows us how texts that forge links between stories, plants, communities, and activism generate a concept of eco-citizenship in which human beings and the ecological world are mutually sustainable. Together, these novels redefine the dimensions of and potential within democratic participation.

*All Over Creation* tells the story of Yumi Fuller’s return (with her three mixed-race children) to her childhood home in Liberty Falls, Idaho, after a twenty-five year estrangement from her parents. The Fuller potato farm becomes the meeting place of the Fuller family and an environmental activist group called the Seeds of Resistance who make a “pilgrimage” in their McDonald’s french-fry oil fueled camper to meet Yumi’s father, Lloyd Fuller (140). The Seeds have pegged Lloyd as their “hero of the revolution” as a result of what they consider to be an outspoken resistance to the genetic engineering of potato crops as well as an interest in learning about the seeds that he and his wife cultivate and sell.23 Liberty Falls, the farm, and the novel become sites of

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23 The initial conversation between Geek and Y, two members of the Seeds of Resistance, about Lloyd pinpoints some of the political difficulty in attaching themselves with him. While Geek calls Lloyd “Our master. Our guru,” saying that he is “A humble seedsman, but a visionary” (106), Y protests: “Dude’s a
convergence for the complexities of communal membership, civic action, and eco-politics. Seeds – both the ecological seeds of plants and the physiological seeds of humans (i.e., children, family lines) – are central to this convergence, and their relevance extends much further than a biological-basis of development.

The novel’s use of seeds links environmental conditions and resources with narratives of communal continuity and transformation, and this link is made possible by stories. In these seeds, the novel teaches, lie stories of human, animal and plant migrations. According to Geek, a member of Seeds of Resistance, they “embody the fruitful collaboration between nature and humankind, a history of our race and migrations” (162). Were we to trace the “narrative line” in seeds back thousands of years, Geek tells us, we might be tucked carefully into a hatband or the hem of an immigrant traveling “from the Old country to the New World,” or we would be lodged in the fur of a yak migrating across Mongolia. Seeds are the bearers of an historical narrative here, the eco-literary culmination of the convergences between nature and humanity, and they can be articulated and read “very much like books” (171).

The novel conflates the planting of seeds with the telling of stories, and puts forth both as forms of cultivation and as acts of ecological and cultural survival: “If no one knows what they are, and if no one plants them,” Geek warns, “the seeds and their stories will die” (162). This means, for instance, that the naming and cultivation of the seeds major Christian” (106). The complex nature of this convergence of the Seeds’ political mission with the pro-life underpinnings of Lloyd’s food production politics arises throughout the novel.
that make their way to the Fuller’s farm after traveling from Bavaria to the U.S. in the mid-1800’s is both a familial story and an ecological act of survival. Given to a granddaughter on her grandfather’s deathbed as the “family’s only legacy from the old country,” their migration to the Fuller Seeds collection (and beyond, to their customers) signifies not only a cultivation of the bean plants themselves, but also a continuance of the human family’s story of migration and growth (114). Similar to the way Solar Storms links the ecological world to a genealogy and history and how the novel defines plant-dreaming as a skill essential to sustaining the ecological-human connection necessary for survival, All Over Creation defines seeds as a genealogical narrative of shared familial, cultural and ecological survival. Just as Angel’s and Tulik’s careful harvesting of plants threatened by the dam project is an eco-act of protest, the Seeds of Resistance (particularly Geek) are deeply invested in categorizing the mammoth amount of seeds collected by Yumi’s mother, Momoko Fuller, (a practice with particular import as Lloyd draws nearer his deathbed and Momoko closer to Alzheimer’s) as a means of resistance to genetic engineering. 24 In both novels, then, there is a profound amount at stake in the survival of the green world – its continuity also means the survival of people (individuals, families, communities), and their stories and histories. That is, both novels show vital

24 This practice is one that Momoko undertook for years: “…shaking the seeds….drying them and sorting them, measuring and labeling them, and slipping them into envelopes for dissemination by the U.S. Postal Service to destinations around the world. Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night… She was more reliable than the birds and the bees, and with a far greater reach” (113). Like Angel, Momoko’s harvesting practice shows a human role in an ecosystem, and it suggests that there are particular ways to enact the human-nature relationship that are productive rather than destructive.
interdependences between physiological and ecological survival and the continuity of communal, cultural narratives.

*All Over Creation* extends this connection between the ecological and the communal to Americanness more broadly; it becomes something that is about the U.S. as a national community and the vitality of democratic practice. First, in a letter to his customers in a Fullers’ Seeds catalog, Lloyd Fuller exclaims, “Our plants are as immigrant as we are!” (67). The seed-stories in the novel are coded as particularly American by nature of their transience and rerooting in U.S. land – like immigrants, they have come from the ‘old country’ to be cultivated in the new. Second, from supermarket actions to the skull and bones stickering of genetically engineered potato products to tofu crème pie-ing the president of a biotech company to their work on the Fuller farm, the environmental activism embodied by the Seeds of Resistance offers an explicit model of the American trademarked concept of free-speech, and it highlights the role of political resistance in American democracy. By novelizing their emphatic call to arms on local levels, quite literally from the seed up, and their “citizens’ right to know” stance, Ozeki links the political potential of environmental activism with American civil rights and narrative practice.25

The Seeds’ work against biotechnology finds its fullest expression in an event they organize on Fuller Farms: “In the spirit of America, in the spirit of our forefathers

25 Their emphasis on the citizen’s/consumer’s right-to-know is demonstrated in their repeated printed line on their website and in the flyer they sneak into a packet of promotional material at the Potato Convention: “Why does the U.S. government classify CYNACO’s Nulife potato not as a food but as a pesticide?...**Demand accurate and responsible labeling on all genetically modified foods! It’s your right to know!”** (bolded emphasis in original text 184).
and foremothers, who fought for independence from economic slavery and colonialist expression in the spirit of the Boston Tea Party, we hereby declare this the Idaho Potato Party!” (303). The event – a weekend of plays, classes and a rally – becomes a site of convergence for Christian church-going pro-lifers and hackie-sacking dread-locked hippies, both of whom, although clearly for different reasons, find common ground in their investment in non-technologized seeds and food products. While they joined under this specific environmental cause, there is a broader galvanizing sentiment at work as well, articulated in the idea that they are enacting their democratic right, and organizing “in the spirit of America.” Ozeki shows how an environmentalist sensibility can be a venue in which the American right to participate in a democratic nation can come to fruition. Environmental activism is shown as a useful and productive means of creating change26 and for creating community across political lines, and its novelization participates in these acts. It is no coincidence that the novel begins with the same language that Lilith, one of the Seeds of Resistance, uses to open the Idaho Potato Party, “It starts with the earth” – both the novel and the Idaho Potato Party are political acts fueled by an environmentalist sensibility that tracks stories of ecological and human conditions.

Ozeki’s novel ends with a letter from Frankie, the youngest and previously the most apathetic member of the Seeds of Resistance, sent to his infant daughter, Tibet, who has been adopted by the Fullers’ childless neighbors. In addition to the letter is a picture

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26 They do end up shutting down NuLife production at least for now, and their mission is publicized in an article entitled “A New American Revolution?”. 348
of Frankie, taken, as he says, “on the first day of the Revolution” at the WTO rally in 1999. It shows him dressed in black, holding a placard that reads in bolded caps “RESISTANCE IS FERTILE!”. This letter and image, at the end of the novel, is a sharp declaration that offering narratives is an act of political, democratic participation and a form of fertility, a kind of seeding. To tell a story is to procreate on multiple levels, to keep a story moving through minds and mouths is a form of reproduction, a tilling. These “radical acts of cultivation” suggest that an eco-narrative is not just about plants (257). It is about cultures, narration, democratic right and practice, and the potential individuals have in shaping and performing roles as communal citizens.

We see Ozeki grappling with the complexities that arise from these ecological/human convergences throughout the novel. Lloyd attacks the notion of “non-native” plants in one of his catalogs arguing: “We believe anti-exoticism to be explicitly racist, and having fought for Freedom and Democracy against Hitler, I do not intend to promote Third Reich eugenics in our family garden… Mrs. Fuller and I believe the careful introduction of species into new habitats serves to increase biological variety and health” (67). Lloyd’s nationalist rhetoric about his seeding practices, specifically his reference to Hitler and eugenics, calls racial violence to the forefront of his ecological theory, suggesting that there is a connection between a land ethic and a political stance on racism and immigration. As Ozeki notes in an interview, Lloyd’s hero, Luther Burbank (whose sentiments Ozeki uses as epigraphs for five of the seven parts of the novel), was not only the creator of the Burbank potato, but also a eugenicist. The novel seems to be playing with the idea that there are fine lines between the manipulation of ecological
crops and of human physiology, between controlling nature and controlling humankind, between taming the wild and restricting the racial and cultural diversity of human beings.

This reference suggests that there is a deeply rooted violence borne out of this complex intermingling which resonates uncomfortably in various moments of human dilemma that arise around race matters in the novel. For instance, fourteen-year old Phoenix has a gun put in his mouth by a classmate who wants to “clean up the school…of everybody. Niggers, Japs, queers, wetbacks, hippie scum, whatever” (237). If the interconnections between seeds and stories carry a narrative of Americanness – that is, a narrative comprised of a collection of “heritage[s]” and “migrations” – then, this narrative is marked not only by nationalist growth and development, but also by a mess of human and ecological violences. Human, racialized and cultural difference, coded in Phoenix’s brown skin and his temporary migrant status since he has moved from Hawaii to Idaho, is treated like an invasive species here. By this analogy, communal membership is also an ecological condition, and one’s potential position within a citizenry can be either cultivated or eradicated (or, of course, sit within the lines in between – when people become victim to acts of eradication).

The strange (non)presence of the American Indian in the novel hints at these overlaps. Yumi, from first grade, stars in the annual “Pilgrims’ Pageant” as “the Indian princess” (7). While “real Indians…Shoshone kids” attend the same school, Yumi is given the privileged role to proclaim her lines every year: “Noble Pilgrims, my people and I welcome you to our land. We know that your journey has been a hard one, and we will help you. Pray, take our seeds and plant them – ” (7). With such ease, non-white
bodies are conflated (a Japanese-American girl playing an Indian character) and living Indians are made invisible in this act.\textsuperscript{27} The violent history that is embedded in the ritual of this pageant is subsumed in a gentle narrative of sharing seeds and ecological knowledge. The young Elliot Rhodes, Yumi’s history teacher with whom she has an affair, is the one to point out, “It was genocide – we \textit{stole} their land, and then we exterminated them… Don’t you know \textit{anything} about the Shoshone and the Bannock who’ve live on this land for thousands of years, before there even was an Idaho?” (22).\textsuperscript{28}

The novel is suggesting a convergence of cultural and ecological history – the shared “exterminat[ion]” of Indian peoples and the ecological overhaul of their land to be used for potato farming. The small, framed photograph that still sits in Yumi’s childhood bedroom is another reminder of this history, also muted by the familiarity of the gentle version of the Thanksgiving narrative: “…[A] solemn Indian princess [is] standing in front of the screen door of the farmhouse, hand in hand with Lloyd. Noble Pilgrim. The tip of her feather barely reached his hipbone” (17). The conflated images of child/father and Indian/Pilgrim subtly portray the paternalism and power positions carried in these

\textsuperscript{27} This collapse happens again when Cass babysits Poo, Yumi’s youngest child, and Cass comments on how people wonder at their differences in skin color: “Most people thought he was from the reservation” (130).

\textsuperscript{28} There is a painful irony in Elliot Rhodes ("erodes") being the voice of this history here, as he then begins to have an affair with Yumi, his ninth grade student, and later becomes the wheeling and dealing PR person for Cynaco’s NuLife potatoes (the bio-engineered potatoes that the Seeds of Resistance are trying to expose). While he points out the problem of the “revisionist” narrative of colonial violence here, he enacts this consuming violence upon a young Yumi and later becomes a master at circulating his own version of a “revisionist” narrative to sell his product. Ozeki makes this perfectly clear when Rhodes plans to use the eco-political conflict between neighboring Indians and potato farmers to his advantage: “Potato farmers are being sued by a local Indian tribe demanding compensation for groundwater contamination from agricultural runoff. Shoshone, he remembered… He had been pressing Cynaco to support InterTribal Agricultural Councils. Maybe he could even get a Shoshone spokesperson to endorse NuLife – fewer pesticides mean clean water for our people, that sort of thing. Wisdom. Heritage. Indians always made for positive imaging” (188). Again, Ozeki points to the crafted nature of these narratives and images.
roles, and the photograph provides a tongue-in-cheek nostalgic commemoration of these relationships (supposedly) prior to the violence and conflicts that erupted afterwards in each of them.

As Zitkala-Sa began to show at the turn of the century in her stripped tree metaphor and Hogan shows in the equation between colonial violence (upon bodies, families and cultures) and environmental destruction, Ozeki’s novel draws attention to the way violent ecological practices are also violent human acts – that there is a direct link between eco-politics, land ethic, and the way American human subjects are socioculturally and politically rendered as central or marginal members of the citizen body. Both Hogan and Ozeki narrate the consequences of ecological/social convergence and expose the ways human bodies, cultures, and communities are at mutual ecological and social risk, and they teach us that by narrating and theorizing an environmentalist sensibility, literary production and the act of exchanging stories can become a procreative, political act. The consistency with which both novels emphasize and draw connections across human and plant procreation, familial and ecological lines, and the processes of earth’s creation highlights the potential for a fertile eco-political resistance.

That All Over Creation also grapples with the concept of creation may seem obvious. In addition to the title, though, the novel is framed by seven parts, each of which is numbered “first” through “seventh,” echoing the seven days of creation narrated in the Bible. And, similar to the biblical version in Genesis, Ozeki’s novel begins with
the creation of the earth in a chapter called “In the Beginning.”

Liberty Hyde Bailey, in 1915, begins his book *The Holy Earth* with a chapter by the same title. He writes, “It suits my purpose to quote the first sentence in the Hebrew Scripture: ‘In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth’” (5). Bailey uses the biblical story of creation to make sense of humankind’s role in an ecological system. He quotes from Scripture again, “And God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over it over… every living thing that moveth upon earth.’

We have assumed that there is no obligation to an inanimate thing, as we consider the earth to be: but man should respect the conditions in which he is placed…. (6). Bailey’s version both accepts the biblical concepts of creation and expands upon the role of human beings as a “co-operat[ive]” one. When Ozeki explicitly draws upon this same biblical language (almost a century after Bailey does) to be the title of her first chapter of her novel, it sounds different:

> It starts with the earth. How can it not?...[I]magine you are a seed—of an apple, or a melon, or even the pit of a peach – spit from the lips of one of Lloyd’s crossbred grandchildren, arcing through the air and falling to earth, where you are ground into the soil, under a heal, to rest and overwinter… And then imagine the triumphant moment when you crack the crumbly crust, poke your wan and wobbling plumule head through the surface and start to unfurl—imagine, from your low and puny perspective, how vast Lloyd Fuller’s acreage must look to you now. (3-4)

Ozeki comments on the deliberateness of her title in connection with the theme of creation in an interview: “I wanted to bring in this idea of creation because that’s so much what the book is about, generations and regenerations. But also it’s about this need we have to imitate God and to impose our own creative will on nature, so I wanted something that had a slight Biblical resonance like that. The idea of ‘all over creation’ — there's something wild and out of control about that, a randomness that I really liked.”

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The novel positions its reader as the seed of a plant, altering not only the essential nature of humanity but also resituating the actual view of the earth. “Lloyd Fuller’s acreage” suddenly becomes an expanse significantly more enormous from this perspective than it would from human eyes. This humbling experience at the start of the novel – the demand that the reader see herself as “a random seedling” ultimately endangered by the monocrop of “genetically identical potatoes” – does more than just destabilize an anthropocentric perspective; it also establishes more broadly the drama of a novel that deals with the way seeds, crops, and humans all are affected by “cross-pollination, human migration, and plant mutation” (4). Ozeki’s fictional version of “the beginning” is not necessarily illustrative of the “cooperation” between humankind and “the earth.” All Over Creation begins by putting humankind into a position and consciousness of the ecological entity, a perspective that encourages the sensory experience of such a subjectivity. In some ways, this literal metaphor of human-being as plant is not new. I have shown, for example, in previous chapters how Zitkala-Sa uses the metaphor of self as a tree, and how Mary Austin encourages readers to “get down to the eye level of rat and squirrel kind.” Ozeki’s description of the human being as plant finds the clearest resonance in the conclusion of Mary Antin’s autobiography The Promised Land (1912) when she writes, “… I had a vision of myself, the human creature, emerging from the dim places where the torch of history has never been, creeping slowly into the light of civilized existence, pushing more steadily forward to the broad plateau of modern life, and leaping, at last, strong and glad, to the intellectual summit of the latest century” (285). For Antin, this metaphor is a useful way to place herself as immigrant into what she calls “the garden of
America” to imagine a “shining future” rather than being “tied to the monumental past” (285). But this vision of herself as a creature emerging from the earth is entrenched in both Darwinian concepts of competition between species and the civilizing discourse of assimilation. This version of a ground-level perspective that we see in *All Over Creation*, though, imagines the birth and vision of an ecological entity that is not invested in assimilation. In fact, its resistance to an assimilationist ideology is implied in the “crossbred[ness]” of the seeders. Again, a century later, Ozeki’s narrative draws from a familiar language and metaphor, but to a different end.

Twice in the novel, Ozeki’s vision of ecological life in its beginning is brought to an abrupt and violent end. Ozeki follows up this description of a growing seed with its immediate termination: “Just as you turn your face into the rays and start to respire, maybe even spread out a leaf or two and get down to the business of photosynthesizing – *grrrrrip*, weeded right out of there. Sayonara, baby” (4). Later, close to the conclusion of the novel, Geko paints a similar picture, using the language of the Seeds of Resistance to describe a comparable situation: “Imagine it [Momoko’s garden] in bloom, in all its incredible beauty and diversity and rich profusion, and now… *zap!* Picture it gone. Now picture the whole planet as a garden, teeming with millions upon millions of flowers and trees and fruits and vegetables and insects and birds and animals and weevils and us. And then, instead of all that magnificent, chaotic profusion, picture a few thousand genetically mutated, impoverished, barren, patented forms of corporately controlled germplasm” (409). These revisions of a linear narrative of a purely productive creation
into a version of it marked by lethal interferences has complicated resonances within and outside of the novel.

On one hand, these descriptions of the ruthless termination of a budding plant ring, to an extent, with the pro-life language used to describe the abortion of a human fetus (i.e., the fertile development terminated abruptly and violently). This connection is undeniable in a novel that grapples so consistently with reproduction (and the restraints or manipulations of reproduction). Yumi’s estrangement from her parents (particularly her father) is the result not only of her affair with Rhodes, but specifically due to her having had an abortion. In the first letter she writes to her parents during this estrangement, Yumi describes the familial effects of this act in terms of an environmental disaster: “Do you remember when that ammonia train car derailed? And all the stuff went into the air and we all had to evacuate, and how scared we were because the poisonous gas was going everywhere on every wind, but you couldn’t see it? That’s what it was going to be like” (37). This collapse between the environmental and biological recurs throughout the novel. Yumi remembers, for instance, Lloyd taking her to the cellars during harvest: “‘Look…! They’re alive. Living and breathing,’” he tells her. “‘Then he explained how cloning worked and how every potato was capable of creating endless offspring out of chunks of its living flesh, and I felt so proud, like I was a little chunk of his” (112). The problem with this cloning when used to describe human

30 Although it is important to note also that Ozeki’s use of the words “grrrrrip” and “zap!” seem to exemplify her careful manner of infusing matters with comic language and a light-hearted spirit while she is negotiating difficult issues. This language indicates again the way the novel points out the crafted nature of language and narrative in a political forum.
reproduction and genealogy lies in the exact reason potato farmers practice it: “The eyes grow into identical replicas of the parent...The reason you clone rather than plant from seed is because potatoes, like human children, are wildly heterozygous...displaying a haphazard variety of characteristics... it may prove superior to the parent plant or may prove wildly inferior” (57). This “heterozygous” quality of nature and human biology, its “haphazard variety of characteristics,” is precisely what a novel entitled *All Over Creation* is getting at – the slipperiness (or what Ozeki calls “wild...out of control...a randomness”) of both human and non-human life forms in contestation with the human-controlled restraints on this “randomness.” The Seeds of Resistance work to expose this clamp on heterogeneity. As Geek explains, “Diversity is inconvenient to mechanized farming. This is what happens when agriculture becomes agribusiness” (125). The novel, instead, abounds with a vast “diversity,” of races, lifestyles, beliefs, and politics. The possibility of cloned “offspring,” of exact replicas, is entirely opposed.

In contrast to Yumi’s reproduction later in her adult life (she has three children, fathered by three different men of various races and sexual orientation), her childhood best friend Cass is infertile, suffering through multiple miscarriages.31 Her husband Will, usually quiet, is the character to suggest the connection between farming practices and public health:

> In Vietnam, the government said spray and we sprayed. Never gave it another thought. Now I got this numbness in my arms and the doc says it may be Agent Orange, only he can’t tell for sure because of the exposure

31 Although biologically capable of reproducing, Yumi relates her experience in youth to having “miscarried [her] childhood” (209).
factor on the farm. It bugs me. Cynaco made Agent Orange for the army. They made GroundUp and now the NuLifes, too…. The wife’s had a bout with cancer. Mother-in-law died of it. Old Fuller down the road had part of his colon removed. Maybe it’s related. Maybe it ain’t. And maybe if I was a scientist I could give you a better answer. But I’m just a farmer, so I can’t say.

(220)

Although he does not explicitly connect this health issue with Cass’s infertility, the profound effects of these chemicals on human bodies that he lays out suggest the link.

Cass and Will are the primary figures who bring adoption into the picture of the novel. Cass spends a significant amount of time searching through the profiles of adoptable international children, many of whom have physical disabilities. Will’s one attempt to join Cass in such a search ends abruptly when, searching for a Vietnamese child, he sees “the birth defects and land-mine injuries,” and turns away exclaiming, “It’s like we defoliated the babies, too” (emphasis mine 204). Environmental destruction, chemical use (whether in warfare or agricultural production), and procreation again converge.

Adoption, though, ultimately becomes a practice and symbol of a new kind of fertility in the novel. Both Hogan’s and Ozeki’s novels feature adoption, and in both, it becomes a way to imagine a genealogy and future that move in resistance to Berlant’s “national culture” that enacts eco-social injustice (for Hogan) and honors the singular outcome of cloning over heterogeneity (for Ozeki). The excessive amount of adoptions that take place in All Over Creation point to this reconfiguring of family lines and (re)generation as a vital force in the novel’s outcome. Frankie is a foster child, finally adopted by the Seeds of Resistance; Charmey and Frankie name their daughter Tibet “for orphans[…] for people who have lost their homeland” (346); the Seeds of Resistance
organize a seed adoption program for people (“Garden members”) to “propagate… organically,” save, and disseminate seeds so that Lloyd and Momoko’s varieties do not die with them (357); and, finally, Frankie asks Cass and Will to adopt Tibet as their daughter after Charmey dies. The last two, the seed adoption program and Tibet’s adoption by the Ungers, are most poignant in showing how this practice is one that holds great promise for future life. Melvin/Y proposes the Seed adoption program to Lloyd on his deathbed and Charmey’s death is so terribly sad and unjustified – that the plant seeds and biological seed will continue outside of the farm and insular family is a profoundly powerful image to counter the deaths out of which these adoptions emerge. It also is a way to imagine interconnections across politics and lifestyles, as the seeds are to be adopted and disseminated by folks ranging from the Fullers’ Christian clients to activists like the Seeds, and Tibet, the child of two members of the Seeds, becomes the daughter of potato farmers. These scenarios push against the traditional lines of family, intimacy and politics, suggesting that heterogeneity is something procreative, something that allows for continuity, interconnectedness, and even a type of resistance to the stasis and limits of a monoculture.

32 Melvin/Y is emphatic in this system being one of adoption: “We’re not giving them away…People are offering to adopt them. It’s different” (357). This difference, although he does not explicate it, certainly includes the hefty responsibility of tending and caring for them (as one would children).
33 The character Tom Outland of Willa Cather’s novel The Professor’s House, which I discuss extensively in Chapter Three, also is an orphan. He is symbolically adopted by St. Peter, but also on a grander scale, adopted by the nation as a whole.
34 Yumi thinks she sees Lloyd mouth the phrase, “Pray, take these seeds…” when Melvin/Y proposes the seed adoption program. Again, there is the reminder of race and national history in seed-talk here; the presence of this repeated phrase and sentiment here indicates how this moment and proposal mark a new part to a long-standing narrative with multiple ties outside of green politics.
The placard Frankie holds in the picture he sends to Tibet/Betty from the WTO rally – “RESISTANCE IS FERTILE!” – provides the final word on the novel’s convergences of environmentalist sensibility, activism, protest and fertility. The triangle formed by Cass as mother, Tibet/Betty as both biological and adopted child, and “Daddy Frank” writing from the rally with the realization that he “do[es] all these political actions… [to] make sure there’s still some nature around for [Tibet] when [she] grows up” depicts the multiple dimensions of these convergences (416). Cass’s words to Betty close the novel: “Daddy’s going to save the world” (417). If the children of All Over Creation, whom Yumi calls “seedlings,” contribute to a national culture – and Ozeki’s use of nationalist rhetoric in the novel suggests they do – then it is by way of protest rather than compliance, by a celebrated “heterozygous”-ity rather than homogeneity. Just as Yumi’s children’s (nick)names all stand for seed carriers (Phoenix, Ocean, and Poo), children become both carriers of the promise for change (like Frankie who, adopted like a child into the Seeds suddenly realizes his political and personal mission) and the reason to fight for change. The rhetoric of environmental action as significant for “future generations” has existed in formalized environmental thought since conservationism (as I note in the beginning of my project) and its connection to a rhetoric of democratic practice has existed alongside it for just as long. But something beautifully fresh is happening in Ozeki’s novel. There are so many citizens, so many kinds of citizenship and membership made possible in the novel’s version of family, community, and
nation. The activist citizen, though, stands out by the end as a redemptive and resistant force to all the problems of status quo that the novel itself seems to work against. That Frankie will “save the world” is a tribute to people who are doing something to, as he explains in his WTO lingo (recycled, of course, from civil rights language), “take back the power” (415). While the language of eco-democracy could be used to reign in the limits of national membership at the turn of the century, here the actions and thought behind the eco-democracy in this novel work to explode those very limitations of national affiliation.

Geek bitterly mourns that the planet has been reduced to being imagined as “a cute little blue-green orb cupped in the palm of your hand” or “like a logo,” both of which are the result of hearing only “the same old stories, justifying the same old, bad, exploitative, greedy, fucked-up behaviors” (409). Reminiscent of the flattened out image

35 Ursula K. Heise argues in “Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn in American Studies” that All Over Creation is a “multicultural and transnational family romance” in which: “[e]thnic and cultural diversity…are called upon to provide the answers to political – ecological questions on the underlying assumption that cultural and ecological crises are in some way isomorphic and can be solved in terms of the save overarching logic. The multicultural or transnational family is recuperated as an agent of social resistance and as a synecdoche for a more ecologically sustainable social order even as the insistently domestic framing of such cultural encounters contains and limits their socially transformative power…[Ozeki and others] insistently foreground monogamous relationships focused on parenthood, suggesting that historically and culturally specific forms of family form a ‘natural’ basis for an ecologically improved order” (394). In addition to this turn to the family as the symbol of resolution, Heise argues that the novel’s “‘more is better’ [perspective] where diversity is concerned, however desirable it might be as a cultural guideline, cannot be logically derived from the study of ecology” (401). While I am arguing that we see the novel as one of resistance and transformation, Heise points out ways in which it remains entrenched in socio and heteronormative narratives. I have not yet fully determined my reading in response to her critique. I want to emphasize here though that when we put All Over Creation in line with the texts that I have been discussing throughout these chapters, it can be seen as working against many of the problematic elements of equating social and ecological systems. Like earlier authors’ attempts to use this conflated language and imagery as a tool for putting forth either a race or environmental critique (like Zitkala-Sa, Charles Eastman, and Aldo Leopold), Ozeki’s novel, in my mind, does offer a new vision of political action, collective membership, and environmental practices that counteract some (although not all, as Heise points out) of the potentially assimilative tendencies at the start of this discourse.
and story of the Indian/Pilgrim that we saw at the beginning of the novel, Geek’s criticism begins to articulate the way these simple versions extract the histories and complexities of a vast amount of interactions. Ozeki’s novel hints at these “same old stories,” but deliberately breaks them up, asking readers also to break these “behaviors” Geek adamantly opposes. This moment becomes one of epiphany for Yumi when she finally realizes that “…[W]e are responsible. Intimately connected, we’re liable for it all,” and her realization is the hopeful outcome of such narrative revisions (410). The “responsibil[ity]” of citizens to acknowledge the complex nature of the planet and to put this understanding into action marks not only an investment in green politics, but also an engagement with matters of human social justice. If all individuals are “responsible” and “liable” because they are all “intimately connected” then they all have work to do as citizens, but it is the work of protest and change that the novel celebrates, whether it be as parents, gardeners, or political activists.

Both Linda Hogan and Ruth Ozeki use the literary form to model how stories and the act of storytelling allow for the articulation of and resistance to certain terms of national belonging. Their novels bring forth an expanded sense of environmentalism, showing that storytelling is a part of it and can redefine our roles as U.S. citizens and position us as active agents in democratic discourse, policy-making and change. Ramachandra Guha and J. Martinez-Alier argue “In field or factory, ghetto or grazing ground, struggles over resources, even when they have tangible material origins, have always also been struggles over meaning…[M]ost forms of direct action, even if unaccompanied by a written manifesto, are both statements of purpose and of belief. In
the act of doing, protestors are saying something too” (13). While the characters in *Solar Storms* and *All Over Creation* emerge from different sites with varied needs, both novels narrate the deeply complex political and personal dimensions of a shared “struggle for resources” and “meaning.” In the space in between resistance and revolution, the characters in these novels (as well as the novels themselves) make protest, and they push against the restrictive lines of national membership, communal belonging, and democratic participation to imagine and enact a new kind of organic citizenship.

When the turn of the twentieth century brought together ecology, conservationism, immigration and Indian reform, organic citizenship emerged as a way to envision a national collective and its political membership. A century later, this vision of organic citizenship has grown out of a version of assimilative national belonging in which political rights can be subsumed and into a vision of organic citizenship that demands attention be paid to the very ways in which citizens’ rights can be restricted. The legal, political, and literary shifts throughout the century generate a new organic citizenry by the turn of the twenty-first century which, as Ruth Ozeki writes, is built upon being “responsible, [i]ntimately connected, and liable.” This vision of citizenship remains linked with an environmentalist sentiment, but this connection now comes to demand an ethical engagement with questions of justice. These questions, as Linda Hogan and Ruth Ozeki show us, are not simply abstract or fiction on a page, but they have real life implications. The new organic citizen attends to these material matters, exposes and questions them, and demands justice. No longer solely centered in environmental politics nor solely in the politics of civil rights, organic citizenship finally
bridges the two, and in doing so, imagines a political identity that can challenge the injustices that stretch across these boundaries. This role is one that writer-activists like Zitkala-Sa began to envision in writing a century ago, yet there were legal and social restraints in place that took decades to unravel. The eco-narrative that I have tracked throughout these decades continues to grow as environmental conditions deteriorate globally, and as political choices are being made about how to rectify these problems. The ideal of organic citizenship calls us to question, challenge, and protest – as citizens, as writers, and as teachers.
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BIOGRAPHY

Melinda DiStefano was born on February 18, 1976 in New York, New York. She was raised primarily in Demarest, New Jersey. She received her B.A. from Barnard College, Columbia University in 1998. She co-authored a review of *Poets in the Public Sphere: The Emancipatory Project of American Women’s Poetry, 1800-1900* and *Imagining Rhetoric: Composing Women of the Early United States* in *The Journal of American Literature* (2004), and she has a review of *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel* forthcoming in *Contemporary Literature*. She completed her doctoral work in the Department of English at Duke University in 2008, while she was a visiting instructor at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania.