

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

REPRODUCTIVE ANXIETY IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN
ENVIRONMENTAL POETRY

by

EMILY ANN HEGARTY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1996

UMI Number: 9707103

**Copyright 1996 by
Hegarty, Emily Ann**

All rights reserved.

**UMI Microform 9707103
Copyright 1996, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

© 1996

EMILY ANN HEGARTY

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

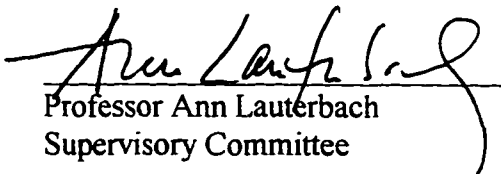
8-26-96
Date


Chair of Examining Committee

8-26-96
Date

 for Charles Holmworth
Executive Officer


Professor Angus Fletcher


Professor Ann Lauterbach
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Acknowledgments

Having taken as long as I have to finish this, I've had time to be helped by many people. Dr. Charles Molesworth of the CUNY Graduate Center and Queens College has been both a wonderful dissertation advisor and a caring human being, and I feel fortunate to have worked with him. Drs. Angus Fletcher and Ann Lauterbach of CUNY were careful and constructive readers. I continue to learn from Dr. Guy Rotella of Northeastern University, who kindly read my proposal and my epistolary updates and offered sensible and humorous advice.

Most of this dissertation was written while adjuncting at Suffolk University in Boston, and I am grateful to my colleagues and students for their many kindnesses. Dean Michael Ronayne and Dr. Anthony Merzlak approved funding for my registration at the Sharp Eyes II conference in Oneonta, NY in June 1996, where I presented a version of Chapter Four. Professor Ann Hughes and Dr. Bette Mandl were daily inspirational figures. At Suffolk's Mildred F. Sawyer Library, Joseph Middleton was gracious and resourceful at the reference desk. Cathy Boyle and Michael Power let me keep books out past their due dates and were there when I needed them.

It is impossible to catalogue the numerous people who responded to my diverse inquiries on various matters, but several individuals deserve special mention here. Dr. Pamela Collins of SUNY/Cobleskill shared with me her work on metaphoricity in Native American texts. Kevin McGuirk of Queen's University in Ontario discussed his work on A. R. Ammons with me. I had several productive conversations about Beat poetry and pornography with John Mulrooney of Paramour magazine. Dr. David Williams of

George Mason University sent me his article on religious conceptions of wilderness. Although a corporate entity, Coffee House Press in Minneapolis kindly donated an elusive Linda Hogan volume.

Far beyond the context of this dissertation, I am fortunate in my friends. Within this context, however, I must thank Margarette Connor, JK Curry, Jean Darcy, Paula Longo Magee, and Jane Pollack for providing wise counsel, staunch support, and even affordable housing. Julie Boyden, Jessica Ladd, Lorraine MacDonald, and Julie Minton insisted repeatedly that I would finish this. Christofer Foss sent me tapes of "music to dissertate by." Ken Pearl has been kinder than I can easily explain.

I am deeply grateful to Marlene McKinley for sharing her office space, her personal space, and the space/time continuum. I am eternally indebted to David Caristi for his staunch provision of computer, research, and emotional support: his many kindnesses improved both this dissertation and my quality of life. Paula Angelli has been my best friend and often a savior. My family--James and Winifred Hegarty, Ruth Hegarty and John Minkle, Agnes and Cliff Gallant, Andrew Hegarty and Jessica Roberts, and Mary Costigan--supported my work both materially and emotionally with unstinting generosity and love. My expressed thanks to them here is necessarily inadequate.

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents and especially to the memory of Bernard Costigan, who asked me to finish it.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction: Reproductive Anxiety	page 1
Chapter Two: Spawning Madonnas: Mary Oliver's Maternal Animals	page 21
Chapter Three: Linda Hogan: Genocide and Environmentalism	page 63
Chapter Four: Gary Snyder: Preserving the Family Tree	page 94
Chapter Five: A. R. Ammons: Sexual and Textual Reproduction	page 146
Chapter Six: Dirty Pictures, Dirty Places: Environmentalism and Pornography	page 185
Works Cited	page 216

Chapter One: Introduction: Reproductive Anxiety

This dissertation draws on the popularity of environmentalism and the frightening environmental threats to human fertility and survival to posit a reproductive anxiety in contemporary American environmental poetry. I argue that the work of the environmental poets I examine here reveals strains of this anxiety in treatments of gender and reproductive issues both biological and literary. Building on the classic metaphor which conflates biological reproduction with literary production, I examine how this poetry reveals an environmental reproductive anxiety in its revisions of this trope.

There are real environmental threats to human reproduction and the survival of the human species. It is a real possibility that parts or all of the planet may become too environmentally degraded to sustain human life. Many nonhuman species have already become extinct due to environmental loss or degradation. Chemical poisons and radiation have seeped into the environment and compromised human health, reproductive and otherwise. There is real and warranted global concern over holes in the ozone layer, global warming, and threats to the world food supply. As cultural critic Andrew Ross notes, the apocalypticism of much environmental writing shares its doomsday tone with socially conservative religious groups awaiting the Rapture, urging readers to mend their ecological ways while there is still time (13-14).

Both conservative religions and conservationists reserve some of their greatest concerns for issues of sexuality and reproduction. We have long been cautioned about the dangers of continuing world overpopulation, and continue to witness serious conflicts between those who support and those who resist artificial intervention in human

reproduction via artificial birth control and/or abortion. Recent research has revealed that environmental contaminants are adversely affecting reproductive development and ability in both animal and human populations. In 1984, the Conservation Foundation cited "industrial pollutants as contributors to rising infertility, clusters of birth defects, 'hot spots' of miscarriages, and the unusually early onset of menopause among some women" (Nelson 177). Peter Montague reports that toxic chemicals like DDT and PCBs have contributed worldwide to a decline in sperm counts, an increase in testicular cancer, and even a decrease in penis size. In the United States, more recent attention has been given to chemical environmental contaminants which mimic the hormone estrogen's effects and thereby wreak havoc with the hormonal balance and fertility of contaminated animals, including human animals. In her new book Our Stolen Future, scientist Theo Colborn links such hormonal contamination not only to reduced human fertility rates but also to phenomena generally considered social, such as hyperactive and learning-disabled children, increased rates of child and spousal abuse, and lower average Scholastic Aptitude Test scores.¹

These types of social issues are precisely those implicated in the contemporary political rhetoric of "family values," and at their heart they are about definitions of gender. Heretofore, poor scholastic performance by children or more violent family dysfunctions were seen as the sad result of poor parenting, itself a reflection of a lack of moral values and traditions in American culture generally. The classic proposed solution to such serious problems is a return to traditional gender roles under which women leave

¹ For an overview of this research, see Raloff's articles.

the workplace and conform to the traditional stereotype of the full-time at-home mother and wife while men work as breadwinner for the traditional nuclear family. The fact that this stereotype has never been true for most social classes at most times has not prevented its being wielded as a cure-all for contemporary social ills.²

The gender inflections of environmental rhetoric contribute to this matrix of social meaning. Environmentalism has entered the discourse of gender, generally on the side of traditionalism. Two recent issues of "women's magazines" illustrate this point. The July 1996 issue of Mademoiselle, amidst articles on "getting a guy to tell the truth" and "how to zap unwanted hair," includes an overview of research on fertility-compromising pollutants with the frightening headline: "Will pollution ruin your chance of having a baby?" A photo of researcher Louis Guillette examining alligator genitalia is somewhat jarring in pages generally devoted to beautiful women in beautiful clothes. The article explicitly raises issues of gender integrity, calling the contaminated alligators of Lake Apopka in Florida "sexual freaks" and quoting Guillette's emotional 1993 statement to the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment: "Every man sitting in this room today is half the man his grandfather was. And the question is, are our children going to be half the men we are?" (Fagin 116). In 1995, Chanel ran an advertising campaign in women's magazines for "Total Defense," a facial moisturizer. The product bottle, complete with Chanel logo, is displayed against a grainy black-and-white image of a city skyline almost entirely obscured by smog. The

² For contemporary examples, consider the various heated analyses of the respective suitability of Elizabeth Dole and Hilary Clinton for the role of "First Lady" in the 1996 elections, or the hysterical debate over gay marriages.

moisturizer is touted as "an Environmental Protection Agency for your skin" and is promised "to help neutralize major pollutants." Considering the repressive gender stereotypes fostered by the beauty industry generally, one is tempted to read political meaning into the advertisement's guarantee of defense against "damaging free radicals." While the idiocy of cosmetics advertising and the publications supported by it is perhaps not a central problem of our time, it is disconcerting to see important environmental issues reduced in popular culture to an opportunity for the policing of gender roles.

I turn then from popular culture to poetry in search of a more nuanced use of this rhetoric. This dissertation examines the gendered discourse of reproductive anxiety in the work of four environmental poets: Mary Oliver, Linda Hogan, Gary Snyder, and A. R. Ammons. I consider reproductive anxiety in its broadest sense, encompassing issues of maternity and paternity, the maternal and the paternal. I consider the poets' use of ideas about ancestry and progeny in individual, familial, cultural, and literary terms. While metaphors of pregnancy and birth are pervasive and well-documented images of literary creation, I will show that they acquire special meaning in the work of environmental writers concerned with human and nonhuman species survival. Quite apart from concerns for the future of humanity, reproductive anxiety in contemporary environmental poetry raises concerns about literary reproduction and the future of poetry itself. I find that a reading of these poets is both troubled and enriched by the complications an environmental focus brings to gender issues in their work. The remainder of this introductory chapter gives some backgrounds to environmental literary criticism and previews the rest of the dissertation.

While attention to "nature writing" in terms of pastoralism, regionalism, Romanticism, and Transcendentalism has long been an aspect of literary study, the new emphasis on environmentalism has given rise to a corresponding new emphasis in literary criticism. The Modern Language Association recognized the new field with its publication of Teaching Environmental Literature (Waage) in 1985. In the following years, several academic journals, including The CEA Critic, published special numbers on nature and environmental writing. In 1993, a new journal appeared entitled ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment. A closely related Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) publishes a separate newsletter and sponsors an active Internet discussion group. Most recently, scholars Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm have collected articles in environmental literary studies spanning the past twenty years in The Ecocriticism Reader. Such publications and activities indicate that literary environmentalism is indeed a growing field.³

In many ways, the concept of the environment is a revision of the concept of nature. There is an important difference in emphasis between the two terms. The concept of "nature" generally invokes a vast primal Creation, all that is not manmade: nature is usually conceived of as infinite, unchanging and ordained. These qualities are often seen as divine insofar as nature is seen as an unmediated example of a divine plan or creation. More secular accounts still retain a kind of numinosity insofar as they posit nature as a space untrammelled by culture. Nature is also often the place where the

³ See, for instance, the popularizing overviews of ecocriticism as a field by Jay Parini and Karen Winkler.

secular and religious overlap, as is clear in the common conception of nature appreciation as enlightening or uplifting, and in the many descriptions of the beauty of nature as something holy. In this sense, Arthur Lovejoy wrote insightfully of nature as an "aesthetic norm."

The term "environment," in contrast, is generally used with more specific and local connotations. An environment is an immediately surrounding area. Unlike the more abstract "nature," an environment can be changed by what happens within it. Environments are sites of interaction and consequences. Contemporary environmentalists have exploited successfully the rhetorical differences between the terms "nature" and "environment" to strategic advantage. They use the term "environment" in a universal sense, renaming "nature" as "environment." This rhetorical move distances them from traditional ideas about nature and stresses the need for interaction and intervention in a dynamic environment too often perceived as changeless Nature.

To revise our conception of nature, as the environmentalists ask us to do, means revising many cherished cultural assumptions. Nature, in both its religious and secular conceptions, serves as a legitimating authority in contemporary social and political discourse. The authority invested in the concept of nature can be used to justify both religious prejudice (as in the condemnation of gays and lesbians as "unnatural") and secular policy (as in the proposal of various forms of social Darwinism based on a philosophy of "adapt or die"). Conceptions of Nature as a storehouse of resources free

for unlimited harvest underlie capitalist theories of industry and commerce, and indeed the related ideas of value and worth.

Part of the environmental project is the redefinition of the role of humans within the environment, and this redefinition of humans has necessarily entailed a redefinition of gender roles. A very basic cultural assumption about nature is the idea that humans and human culture are somehow separate from nature. Environmentalism, in contrast, insists that human societies are part, often a destructive part, of the ecosystems they inhabit. However, once humans and human culture are defined as part of nature, human gender differences become part of nature too. Here the entire environmental argument becomes troubled with unresolved gender issues. If the land should be restored to its preindustrial purity, should traditional preindustrial gender roles, which Paul Shepard calls "vernacular gender." (81) be restored as well? Or if traditional cultural practices should be abandoned as environmentally destructive, should traditional gender roles be transformed?

Feminist theorist Jane Flax notes that anatomical differences between males and females have long been exempt from what Max Weber called the "disenchantment" of the natural world by Western science. As more and more of "nature's mysteries" were solved by science, gender difference became one of the last bedrock articles of faith in the "facts of nature." Gender concepts became "complex metaphors for ambivalences about human action in, on, and as part of the natural world" (Flax 635). Feminist critic Ellen Cronan Rose notes that "lurking just below the surface of quite justified concern

about the increasingly disjunctive relationship between humans and nature is a knotted lump of unexamined anxiety about gender, sexuality, and reproduction" (77).

Nature is the ultimate authority of essentialism, which is the belief that genders and/or races have inherent natural qualities. Theorists opposed to essentialism are generally social constructionists. Social constructionists do not subscribe to a belief in an inherent human nature. Rather, they believe that gender identity and other personal qualities are the results of environmental influence. The emphasis of social constructionists on environmental interaction tends to resonate with aspects of the environmental movement which seek new ways to relate to the natural world, shunning the "back to nature" movement as reductive, reactionary and impractical.

For the past decade, the debate over essentialism has been a central dispute between and among various gender theories. Essentialism was long associated with the "French feminists," deconstructivist theorists like Hélène Cixous. Other deconstructionists, like Luce Irigaray, reject not just essentialist definitions of woman, but any definition of women at all because, as Elizabeth Berg explains, such representations "must necessarily take place within the context of a phallogentric system of representation in which the woman is reduced to mirroring the man." Not to be represented is not the solution either, Berg continues, because "the presence of woman as blank space--as refusal of representation--only serves to provide a backdrop or support for masculine projections" (17). Perhaps impatient with such theoretical stalemates, "Anglo-American" feminists have often been resistant to postmodern critical theory (although this is changing), and especially tend to see essentialism as impractical for the

achievement of specific political goals. Perhaps Gayatri Spivak best demonstrates the conflicts of the debate over essentialism. In a 1985 essay, Spivak endorses "a *strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (205). In other words, people should define themselves as a group in order to achieve specific goals for the entire group, such as equal pay for women. In a 1986 essay, however, Spivak cautions that "essentialism is a trap" (89). In a 1988 interview, Spivak refuses at first to be pinned down about her views on essentialism, but then connects essentialism to undismissible biological bodies, and concludes that "death . . . can only be thought via essence or rupture of essence" (177). She thereby links essentialism to precisely the concerns of this dissertation, since the widespread death of extinction is the ultimate fear lurking behind reproductive anxiety. We shall see that essentialist thought does pervade the work of the environmental poets under discussion.

Among the most essentialist of environmentalisms is ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is a combination of ecology and feminism that emphasizes a connection between misogyny and the destruction of the environment. Ecofeminists see this connection as the outcome of a social equation in which women are equated with nature while men are equated with culture.⁴ Cultural ecofeminists tend to be essentialist in seeing the connection between women and nature as biological and inescapable. Social ecofeminists tend not to be essentialist, treating the same connection as a powerful myth

⁴ A related philosophy can be seen in some aspects of the contemporary men's movement in which this equation is reversed. In this view, virility "is connected to a nature no longer viewed as reproductive and providing but as 'wild,' as violent, competitive and sexual . . . and 'the female' is viewed in contrasting terms as insipid, domestic, asexual and civilizing" (Plumwood, "Feminism" 8).

that can be changed and used as a political tool through ecofeminist activism and critique (Plumwood, "Feminism" 10). Cultural ecofeminists make a virtue of the posited connection between women and nature, and see environmental problems primarily as the result of men industrially raping Mother Earth. Through ecofeminism, therefore, women can save themselves *and* the world from men, or at least from sexist, polluting men and the misguided women who work with them. (The occasional softhearted nurturing ecofeminist will consent to save the men, too.) Essentialists also tend to see races essentially, which leads to a colonial tone in much of their (often romanticized) writing about "native" peoples.

Essentialism is often reinforced by calling on the numinous and religious ideas of nature discussed above. For many ecofeminists, Mother Nature is a goddess, the Earth Mother is primal and powerful, and women, through their privileged closeness to and affinity for these deities, are holy. While the figure of the Earth Mother can be traced back to antiquity, her popularity in recent years has been boosted by ecofeminism and the growth of various Neopagan movements.⁵ In addition, the huge popularity of James Lovelock's popular science bestseller Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth gave many casual observers the impression that the Goddess had gained official scientific approval.

⁵ Ecofeminist spirituality is an aspect of contemporary Neopaganism, a movement which includes "feminist goddess worshippers, Celtic revivalist witches, creators of Greek, Egyptian, Norse and Druid revivals, various forms of Shamanism, and assorted other Pagan religious experiments" (Adler 152). This is a complex cultural matrix. It is important to clarify that not all Neopagans are goddess-worshippers; not all goddess-worshippers are ecofeminists; and not all ecofeminists are essentialist. Chances are all these groups would be environmentalist, however.

or even proof.⁶ In many ways, this popular conception of the Goddess dovetails with traditional American images like Lady Liberty or the land itself. The American continent has long been gendered as female. Annette Kolodny sees "America's oldest and most cherished fantasy" as

a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine--that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification--enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction. . . . [It is] that place where the conditions of exile--from Eden or from some primal harmony with the Mother--do not obtain; it is a realm of nurture, abundance, and unalienated labor within which all men are truly brothers (Lay 4).

The great environmental advantage to the image of the Earth Mother, in addition to its intuitive mythic appeal, is that it makes space for the valuing of immanence over transcendence. Most goddess religions value immanence, and see the physical world itself, right now, as holy. For goddess religions, we are always already in sacred space and it therefore follows that we should care for our immediate environments here on Earth instead of awaiting entrance to some better place behind otherworldly pearly gates. Many goddess religions are also ritually earth-based and honor nonhuman life and seasonal, lunar, solar, and tidal cycles. The resonance of this type of cultural outlook

⁶ Actually, Gaia functions in Lovelock's work only very metaphorically as a shorthand way of talking about Lovelock's theory of planetary self-recovery.

with environmentalism is obvious. In environmental poetry, such philosophies and beliefs tend to support notions of language as ritual utterance. At best, such ritual utterances are complex constructs which create a poetry of great cultural resonance. At times, however, ritual utterance gives way to a naive faith in a transparent and transcendent language uncomplicated by nuance.

The popular significance of the Goddess in contemporary American culture raises several problems. One problem is the superficiality and even ignorance with which this discourse is used and abused. While there are many informed questers, practitioners, and worshippers within "alternative spiritualities," there are also a lot of "New Agers" who mix various fragments of diverse and complex religious traditions into a shallow and incoherent form of "goddess worship." An example is the often cavalier treatment of Native American religions. It is disconcerting to read calls for a renewal of Native American spirituality as if Native Americans were a homogeneous population with a monolithic belief system. Differences between Native American cultures are de-emphasized in much spiritualized environmental writing in favor of an emphasis on the differences between Native Americans and "us." The first-person plural assumes that the readership does not include any Native Americans, and is some indication of a gap between oft-repeated endorsements of diversity and any real expectations of same. An instance of this rhetoric may be found in Shepard, who calls for "an archetypal ecology, a paraprimitive solution, a Paleolithic counter-revolution" to which "our best guides, when we learn to acknowledge them, will be the living tribal peoples themselves" (89). Time and again in these sorts of environmental writings, "tribal peoples" are seen as existing

apart from the rest of the world, in a utopian time capsule, or perhaps fighting valiantly against "Western" values from within an embattled enclave. This separation between a polluting "us" and an environmentally aware "them" seems to me to participate in a reductive "Noble Savage" rhetoric and to be in some cases condescending and racist. Moreover, as a romantically "vanished" people, Native Americans are often stereotyped in environmental poetry as the "ecological Indians." According to this stereotype, Native Americans lived in simple harmony with nature, and their pre-European-contact cultures are often offered as utopian cultural solutions to environmental dangers. Especially in the context of reproductive anxiety, Native Americans serve as an important symbol of danger to the human species. Their experience of genocide on this continent serves in environmental poetry as an image of humans as an endangered species.

Another problem with the Goddess image is its frequent oversimplification. Most goddess religions are polytheistic, but even when there is a primary goddess, she is usually at least doubly, if not triply, aspected. Many superficial, pop culture versions of contemporary goddess worship feature a deity akin to what Charlene Spretnak called "Yahweh with a skirt" (xvii). Annis Pratt points out that when "the multivariant feminine divinities of polytheistic religions" are anachronistically "conflated into one all-powerful, dominant figure," one loses "the special impact of polytheism on archetypes and on archetypal responses" (163). In an influential article, Lynn White identifies this monotheistic mindset as the root cause of the environmental crisis. White finds that Judeo-Christian monotheism promulgates a disdainful anthropocentrism that is deadly to the nonhuman environment.

Some feminists question whether the image of Mother Earth is a healthy one for human women. Catherine Roach condemns all environmental use of Mother Earth imagery as simply reinforcing "the mutually supportive, exploitative stances we take toward our mothers and toward our environment" (47). Roach explains that mothers in our society are seen as endlessly supportive, nurturing, and self-sacrificing and concludes that "the last thing the environmental movement should do is encourage us to think of the environment in these terms" (49). The romanticization of motherhood and the emphasis on traditional gender stereotypes found in some treatments of the earth mother go hand in hand with the rise of the New Right in post-Reagan America.⁷ "In male rhetoric about mother earth," Ellen Cronan Rose detects "men's terror of maternal power and their strenuous effort to deny or neutralize it, their guilt at having offended mother, and their desperate need to assure themselves of both their importance to her and her overwhelming concern for them" (77). Nor, according to Rose, is women's mother earth rhetoric unproblematic: "Confronted by [environmental] hazards to, loss of control over, and potential usurpation of their reproductive capacities and choices, women might well feel anxiety, which some may attempt to solace with imagery that affirms women's power, agency, and boundless fecundity" (89-90).

With such a dark view of our environmental predicament, we do not find an earth goddess/mother composed entirely of sweetness and light. The multiply-aspected goddesses discussed above include a negative aspect attuned to the dark side of the

⁷ Some branches of paganism show a playful awareness of this overlap, as in the popular T-shirt featuring an image of Stonehenge beneath the slogan, "Give me that old-time religion." For detailed analysis of post-Reagan ideologies of gender, see Faludi.

Goddess.⁸ While the superficial New Agers like to meditate on healing Mother Earth and nurturing Gaia, they generally fail to consider more destructive goddess figures like Kali or the Morrigan. Like all repressions, this failure returns to haunt the environmental movement in negative aspects of its politics which sometimes give short shrift to basic concepts of human rights. Earth First! spokesman Dave Foreman said about the Ethiopian famine that "the best thing would be to just let nature seek its own balance, to let the people there just starve." An anonymous columnist in the Earth First! journal states: "I take it as axiomatic that the only real hope for the continuation of diverse ecosystems on this planet is an enormous decline in human population. . . . [I]f the AIDS epidemic didn't exist, radical environmentalists would have to invent one" (qtd. in Merchant 175). While overpopulation remains a serious environmental problem, Earth First!'s tenet of zero population growth has also been criticized for its racist and sexist implications. Chaia Heller states: "In the name of 'protecting Mother Earth,' women are reduced to masses of brainless, brown women breeding uncontrollably in the Third World" (225). Environmentalist Carolyn Merchant notes that ecological philosophy of holism, with "its emphasis on the whole over and above the part," has been seen "as being consistent with fascism" (77). More recently, some environmentalists have espoused bioregionalism, a praxis of regional affinity and self-sufficiency which in an extreme form can be politically and culturally isolationist.

⁸ "Negative" and "dark" are barely adequate terms for a spiritual complexity I lack the space to consider here. It is important to note, however, that in no way do these terms equate to the "evil" side of the Western good/evil dichotomy, since even destruction would be seen in these systems as being in holistic relationship with creation.

The environmental and reproductive anxiety I outline above is reflected in our literature. Leonard Lutwack finds that the threat of environmental catastrophe has contributed to the themes of placelessness, place loss, and place devaluation in twentieth-century literature. Daniel White specifically links environmental anxiety, reproductive anxiety, and contemporary literature: "Literary ecology is an expression in human letters of the larger writing of genotypes into phenotypes in the biosphere, poesis as a creative extension of morphogenesis." It is worth noting the prevalence of this literature-as-genetics metaphor, which appears in scientific as well as literary writings. In the recent nonfiction bestseller The Diversity of Life, Edward O. Wilson writes that living species

are living genetic libraries, composed of nucleotide sequences, the equivalent of words and sentences. . . . Organisms more complex than bacteria--protists, fungi, plants, animals--contain between 1 and 10 billion nucleotide letters, more than enough in pure information to compose an equivalent of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. . . . [All species] use a common vocabulary, the nucleic-acid code, even though it has been sorted into radically different hereditary languages" (345).

Donna Haraway discusses the Human Genome Project as the canonization of "a standard genesis story" (Simians 215-16). The dystopian theme of environmental catastrophe and human reproductive failure is already a staple of popular fiction as we see, for example, in the novels of Margaret Atwood, Octavia Butler, and P. D. James.

Environmental literary critic Walter Clark defines environmental literature as distinguished by subject matter rather than genre, and stresses that environmental readings call for a "special emphasis on . . . representational aspects" (6-7). As we shall see, representation is a fraught issue in environmental writing, which tussles uncomfortably with postmodernist, anti-representationalist modes. My critical assumption in the readings that follow is that a successful poem or poetic voice requires the continuance of the human species to provide potential readers. This fear of the extinction of readers may sound like the oft-heard predictions of the death of poetry, but is intensified by the corollary death of the species itself. In this sense, I am reading the poetry as being more than self-reflexive, since it alludes to actual events in a real environment. At the same time, however, I have tried to complicate these readings with attention to how each poet preserves his or her literary legacy while urging the preservation of life.

The first poet I examine is Mary Oliver; Chapter Two focuses on her poetic use of parthenogenetic animal madonnas, the scenes of animal mothers and their offspring which recur repeatedly in her poems. In some cases, these figures represent holistic merging with the environment, and in others they are death dealers. Even as death dealers, however, the madonnas remain a contrast to male figures in wielding death only in service to nurturing offspring and other life-supporting activities. Many of these animal madonnas are self-sacrificial Christ-figures through which Oliver attempts to construct an ecofeminist theology, despite her rejection of the label "feminist," eco- or otherwise. (She prefers to see her focus on nature as part of the Great Books tradition.)

Oliver's poems fail when she tries to offer her maternal life-giving images as alternatives to social and historical problems like poverty, the genocide of Native Americans, and the Holocaust. Their failure is largely due to their ultimate shallowness: in their parthenogenecity they exclude maleness and therefore never quite grasp the holism they reach for.

Chapter Three is about Linda Hogan, a Native American poet and novelist.

Hogan quite explicitly treats the issue of Native American genocide and links this sad history with environmental damage to the North American continent. Her concern is also explicitly reproductive in that she focuses on genetic transmission as the ultimate key to cultural survival. Although well-known in Native American studies, Hogan is not a canonical contemporary American poet, largely due to the perceived simplicity of her language which often draws on Native American spirituality. I argue that this language is not simple but is instead ritualistic--an elaborate and ceremonial use of language largely unaccounted for by postmodern readings.

Chapter Four considers Gary Snyder. Snyder's environmental concerns have been the focus of his political activism and writings for many years and he is the best known of the poets treated here. His reproductive anxiety is revealed in his obsessive focus on the bodies of his sons, who are in his poems the representation of all future human generations and carry the burden of Snyder's complex historiography extending back to the Paleolithic. In keeping with this monumental stress, Snyder typically writes of his wives monumentally as incarnations of both an Earth Goddess bearing his children to people the earth and as a more traditional poetic Muse. Snyder consistently rewrites his

own history and in doing so links himself to various ancient sages and to various indigenous peoples. In this way he positions himself as an heir and continuer of poetic greatness and as a "Native" American. Many Native American groups have attacked Snyder for what they see as an appropriation of their traditions in his "shaman" poems, but Snyder insists that shamanism is a poetic practice belonging to all peoples as a foundation of many religions. The literalization effect associated with reproductive metaphors is itself startlingly literal in Snyder's work, which is more closely intertwined with his personal biography than any of the other poets I study. What is more interesting is that the critical discourse surrounding his work equally literalizes his biography, with many critics praising the "reality" of his poems based on their knowledge of Snyder's actual backwoods experiences.

Chapter Five is about A. R. Ammons, the most academic of the poets I study. Ammons writes postmodern nature poetry which studies the phenomena of his suburban backyard in terms of ecological science. His latest book, Garbage, is an environmental jeremiad. Although he hardly ever writes about people, Ammons's reproductive anxiety is revealed in his transference of reproductive anxiety to the realm of literary longevity. Many of Ammons's elaborate descriptions of natural systems can also be read as mechanisms of canon-regulation and many of his poems explicitly treat his own worries for his poetic reputation. I read his work through a Bloomian scheme of Oedipal conflict and note that Ammons's fear is that this literary reproductive system has become impotent and sterile. (Ammons describes his own work in phallic terms and has been primarily championed by Bloom himself.) Ammons's extremely phallic focus is

complemented by his social conservatism, which is a feature of many environmentalists seeking to retrieve an unpolluted golden age. Ultimately, the garbage of his latest book's title is the more offensive (to Ammons) trash of cast-off books by impotent authors, no longer able to measure up to the greatness of the past.

Chapter Six examines the rhetoric of environmental poetry, which like all political poetry presumes it will have some practical impact on its readers. In its focus on literal real-world outcomes concerning real-world referents, environmental poetry breaks with a disembodied and disenchanted postmodernism. What is important to realize is that this emphasis on reality is not always benign. When environmentalists argue that reading a poem will cause the reader to recycle, they are mirroring the logic of antipornography feminists who argue that seeing a picture will cause the viewer to rape. Such literal interpretations of texts are generally marshalled in service to conservative, indeed repressive, social aims. Both the discourses of environmental aesthetics and the debates around pornography are troubled by unresolved gender issues arising from reproductive anxiety which desires the text to enliven the world.

As a whole, this dissertation demonstrates the power of an environmental reading of contemporary American poetry. Much of the importance of my topic lies in its attention to a site at which contemporary poetry has engaged important current issues and an enthusiastic audience. In 1979, Charles Molesworth complained of the "virtual impossibility of using any public discourse in poetry" due to the debased public language of American culture (Fierce 10). Environmental literature and environmental literary criticism are hopeful signs that a substantial public discourse is re-emerging.

Chapter Two: Spawning Madonnas: Mary Oliver's Maternal Animals

Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winner Mary Oliver is sometimes mistaken for a nature poet because her traditional and almost genteel poems lack the sort of horrific imagery and apocalyptic outrage one associates with environmental activism. The emphasis on the beauty of nature in her poems caused one reviewer to criticize her omission of the "facts" of "toxic wastes or acid rains" (Absher 234), but Oliver has also been praised for her resistance to politicization (Oppenheimer). Environmental criticism, which treats the philosophy of nature as well as its politics, has embraced Oliver's work. Perhaps in response, Oliver seems more willing in recent work to be identified as an environmentalist. In her most recent book of essays, she claims to "think as an ecologist" and calls poetry "the song of our species."⁹

We have seen that gender is one of the concepts implicated in discussions of nature and the environment, and it is surrounding gender issues that we find an important conflict in Oliver's work. Somewhat paradoxically, Oliver's poetic claims to poetic genderlessness are bolstered by an aesthetic essentialism that is ultimately consistent with ecofeminism. Thus Oliver, who refuses to allow her work to be included in anthologies of women's poetry ("Against" 150), is hailed by some critics as an ecofeminist writer. Robin Riley Fast links Oliver's work to ecofeminist Susan Griffin's vision of women's special relationship to the natural world (377). Patrick D. Murphy

⁹ Mary Oliver, Blue Pastures (San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1995) 58-59. Hereafter abbreviated BP. W. John Coletta considers Oliver an environmental writer in his fully theorized dissertation on environmental literary practice. For further critical commentary on Oliver as a poet of nature and the environment, see David Barber, Diane Bonds, Marianne Boruch, Linda Gregerson, and Janet McNew.

includes Oliver in his proposed canon of ecofeminist writers, but suggests the conflict I discuss when he qualifies that Oliver's "ecological awareness remains far more sophisticated than [her] . . . feminist one . . ." (Literature 29). Even critics who don't find Oliver technically ecofeminist, such as Diane Bonds, admit that "there is a sense in which Oliver's poems seem profoundly 'woman-identified' . . ." (5). I suggest that what such critics are perceiving is another essentialism in Oliver, one which makes her work compatible with ecofeminism. This other essentialism is Oliver's conception of the essential Artist and essential Art.

Oliver has been quite explicit about her rejection of feminism. In an interview, she insists that she doesn't "consciously write as a woman" because "that perspective doesn't seem deep enough." In addition to refusing to allow her work to be included in women's anthologies, Oliver states that she's "not on good terms with most women poets" ("Against" 150). Her rejection of feminism, however, is clearly an artistic strategy. In both interviews and her prose writings, Oliver emphasizes her compositional adherence to a philosophy of Keatsian negative capability. She intends the "I"-persona of her poems to be a space held for the reader's occupation; she believes in "letting the poet vanish" ("Against" 142). To do so, she must "try to put off those stances and instances that are particular to one personality and to put on those things that are more suitable to an unparticular, or unspecified, human identity" which is "transferable" ("Against" 141).

Oliver's rejection of personal poetic identity and even poetic gender is clearly in the service of her essentialized definition of the artist. She insists that poets "are born and not made" possessing "[s]omething that is essential" and "too mysterious to be picked

apart." The poems of such a paragon are "mystical document[s]" (Poetry 1) which give "a glimpse into a greater paradise" (Poetry 9). She believes that "for the very top-flight artists . . . [gender] difference is lost." She insists that a conscious practice of "women's poetry" is "wrong" and that women writers who will "alter the course of future art . . . will do so because they're good and not because they're women" ("Against" 150-151).

Her rejection of feminism is based within a larger rejection of the personal in art, as shown in her essay "The Poet's Voice":

Poems of the confessional school--whose "I" voices are the authors' voices and so intended, and whose texts are so often aggrieved and aggressive, frantic and self-involved--seem to me more catharsis than art, more memoir than poem. I turn from them having learned a little about the authors perhaps, but nothing at all about the world beyond personal frenzy. . . . In a hundred years I suspect such poems will be seen as a derivative of therapy, that exercise in which the "I" is encouraged to become, as once indeed in infancy it felt itself to be, the center of the world (BP 112).

Relinquishing the personal, as Oliver urges here and elsewhere, provides "release from the crushing fist of self-concern" and allows "poems to escape their own creator and genesis and belong to the world of shining and useful things" (BP 113).

The effect of this strategy is an oddly insistent anonymity in Oliver's poetry, which is largely first-person lyrics. The insights of her poems, which tend to be spiritual in nature as well as Spiritual-in-Nature, are depersonalized and therefore somewhat flatly

didactic. Despite her appeal to Romantic compositional strategies, her work lacks the engagement of Romantic narrative; there are neither dramatic monologues nor Xanadus to distract us from her nearly relentless testimony to the redeeming power of the natural world. She states that her aim for her first-person lyrics is "to supply it [the "I" voice] to the reader" ("Against" 142). Insofar as she succeeds in doing so, she leaves her poetry open to ecofeminist interpretations. Her resolute championing of traditional Western spiritual and aesthetic values¹⁰ relies on an impersonal universal tone and archetypal imagery that are also found in much ecofeminism. One reviewer of Oliver's 1992 New and Selected Poems, while praising "Oliver's sacramental regard for elemental nature," also warned against her "oracular phraseology and inspirational sermonettes" (Barber 217). Janet Biehl, a critic of ecofeminism, finds a "yearning literary style" characteristic of ecofeminist writings and suggests that "ecofeminism itself is based on a metaphorical mode of consciousness" (84). Biehl's description of ecofeminist literary style applies equally well to Oliver's poetry.

Noteworthy about Oliver's poetry is its relative lack of emphasis on human reproduction and its corollary focus on maternal animal figures. Oliver's poems about human heterosexual relationships are depressing; they all end in pain and abandonment. "Strawberry Moon," for example, goes so far as to explain feminism as a bitter and

¹⁰ For an appreciation of Oliver's traditionalism, see Doty.

displaced response to how badly men have failed women in relationships.¹¹ This motif is akin to ecofeminist misandrist diatribes like the following:

Our species is in an arrested state of adolescence as insecure little men
(and male wannabes) aggressively compete for power and attention.
Playing god, they splice genes in a frenzy of womb envy. Having defiled
our habitat, the patriarchs are preparing to junk Earth like some inner city
ghetto as they venture off in their sterile techno-wombs for ever more
vainglorious war games on the cosmic plane (McGuire 6).

Instead of treating human reproductive issues directly, Oliver displaces reproductive issues and reproductive anxiety onto nature. A good example of this displacement is "The Kitten." In this macabre little poem, Oliver buries a stillborn deformed kitten. She tries to inject transcendence into this biological miscarriage by saying to herself: "life is infinitely inventive. / saying, what other amazements / lie in the dark seed of the earth, yes." More telling, though, is her wish to avoid publicity. She decides not to give this reproductive freak to the museum or to the local newspaper, and instead buries it secretly behind her house and covers the grave "with the reckless blossoms of weeds."¹² In much the same way, her poetry buries anxiety about the state of

¹¹ Mary Oliver, "Strawberry Moon," Twelve Moons (Boston: Little, 1979) 16-18. Hereafter abbreviated TM. See also "An Old Whorehouse" (American 39), "Something" (American 51-52), and "Rage" (Dream 12-13).

¹² Mary Oliver, "The Kitten," American Primitive (Boston: Little, 1983) 6. Hereafter abbreviated AP.

the environment and the reproduction of the human species and covers it over with poems about archetypal parthenogenetic animal madonnas.

This displacing movement is effective in Oliver's poetry largely through her deployment of anthropomorphism and personification as poetic strategies, as we shall see in our discussion of her poems. It is worth noting here though that because of the universalizing effect of anthropomorphism and personification, animal corpses in Oliver's work are generally symbols of environmental concern. In her essay "At Herring Cove," Oliver gives a lengthy catalog of what she finds washed up on the beach:

balloons of all colors, with ribbons dangling; beer cans, soft drink cans.
plastic bags, plastic bottles, plastic bottle caps, feminine hygiene
by-products, a few summers ago several hypodermic needles, the odd
glove and the odd shoe, plastic glasses, old cigarette lighters, mustard
bottles, plastic containers . . . balls of fishline, one with a razor-billed auk
in death-grip (BP 9).¹³

The littering and callousness that killed the auk are not isolated, nor are humans insulated. The allusion to tampon applicators connects this list of litter to human

¹³ The reference to hypodermic needles historicizes this essay and lends the catalog an effective verisimilitude. Oliver's beach is in Provincetown. There was public panic and outrage over the appearance of hypodermic needles on beaches in Massachusetts in the early 1990s, apparently the by-product of insufficiently treated hospital waste. In addition to general environmental concerns, much of the scare revolved around fears that the needles were AIDS-infected--another category of reproductive anxiety and one particularly in play in public discourse of gay culture in Provincetown. This problem has diminished in recent years as the efforts of the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority to modernize sewage treatment seem to be improving environmental conditions in Boston Harbor and other coastal areas.

reproductive cycles. If we read the sea as an archetypal image of the unconscious, we might even consider that what it reveals as it recedes are the heretofore submerged tokens of reproductive and environmental anxieties. The essay continues with a catalog of shells and bones which are more neutral signs of death, but then the corpses pile up again:

Dead harbor seal, dead gull, dead merganser, dead gannet with tiny ivory-colored lice crawling over its snowy head and around its aster-blue eyes. Dead dovekie in winter.

Once, on a summer morning at exact low tide, the skull of a dolphin at the edge of the water. Later the flanged backbone, tail bones, hip bones slide onto the sand and return no more to the gardens of the sea.

The description of the dolphin bones plays on the skeletal similarities of humans and dolphins, and the image darkly parodies the evolutionary narrative in which aquatic mammals are considered to have returned to the sea after a flirtation with life on land. The reference to gardens returned to no more suggests a fall from an unpolluted Eden. Oliver continues listing more ironically littered symbols of human progress, including a lost "set of car keys" which might well be misplaced keys to the Kingdom, and, significantly, various kinds of aquatic egg cases. This reproductive reference abruptly gives way to a literary discussion of Thoreau that is jarringly at odds with the rest of the essay (BP 10). As we saw in "The Kitten" and will see in other poems, Oliver consistently seeks an artistic solution to problems of environmental reproductive anxiety: she seeks a way to cover graves with blossoms.

What makes Oliver's work ecofeminist, in addition to its nearly exclusive focus on themes of the natural world, is her varied and powerful use of maternal imagery to represent natural forces. These images include Earth Mother goddess figures which both draw on traditional nature tropes and lend themselves to ecofeminist interpretations. More interesting, however, are Oliver's pervasive figures of animal madonnas. In their numinous parthenogenecity, these animal madonnas combine the spiritual qualities associated with both Earth Mothers and the Christian image of the Virgin and Child, thereby merging traditional Western and ecofeminist motifs. The worshipful stance the poet takes towards these figures is her primary environmental attitude--her vision of the natural world as sacred. In an essay on Whitman, Oliver says she learned from his work that "the poem is a temple--or a green field--a place to enter, and in which to feel" (BP 15). In her Earth Goddess and animal madonna poems, Oliver is not so much politicizing as proselytizing. Such proselytizing is necessary precisely because of the dangers of environmental degradation. The maternal aspect of Oliver's animal madonna and Earth Mother imagery inescapably raises issues of reproduction. The extent to which, as we shall see, these poems also concern themselves with death reveals Oliver's environmental reproductive anxiety.

The earliest indicator of reproductive anxiety in Oliver's poetry is her prominent use of Earth Mother imagery. "Flower Moon--How She Travels" features a vernal goddess who travels on the south wind hauling a wagon "full of new leaves // which she sprinkles over the trees as she passes, crying out / the words necessary to birth." This goddess lifts "from her wagon the Flower Moon, // round and full and milk-white / as a

woman's breast," kisses it, and hangs it in the sky (TM 11). Another example is "Sleeping in the Forest," in which the speaker sinks into and merges with a maternal earth: "I thought the earth / remembered me, she / took me back so tenderly, arranging her dark skirts, her pockets / full of lichens and seeds." Although this might be read as a death poem with the recycling earth as grave, Oliver emphasizes instead the way she is surrounded by "the small kingdoms breathing / around me." The final lines of the poem imply not death but a kind of restorative intermittent dreaming: "By morning / I had vanished at least a dozen times / into something better" (TM 3).

The speaker of "Sleeping in the Forest" could almost be Wordsworth's Lucy. The silent Lucy who was "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course / With rocks, and stones, and trees" in "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" tells us in Oliver's poem: "All night / I rose and fell, as if in water, grappling / with a luminous doom." Both poems emphasize the merging of a woman with the turning earth. Oliver's adventitious vanishing conforms to the pattern of the elusive ghost-child whose body was unrecovered in Wordsworth's "Lucy Gray," in which case "Sleeping in the Forest" can be read as Lucy's "solitary song That whistles in the wind." We have seen that Oliver invokes the Keatsian principle of negative capability as a compositional model. Contemporary environmental poetry in general draws extensively on Romantic models for the obvious reason that Romanticism offers a canonical instance of a poetry which valorizes nature.

Critic Margaret Homans has warned contemporary female poets against adopting Romantic poetic models precisely because of the typical plight of Wordsworth's Lucy: "Lucy is an admonitory image of the vegetation of the poet's mind that would take place

if the poet were himself to come under the domination of Mother Nature" (29). Homans argues that identifying with Mother Nature is a mistake for female poets because Mother Nature "has no consciousness" (17) and "is prolific biologically, not linguistically" (13). Without consciousness and linguistic production, poetry is impossible. Homans argues that for women poets, unprotected by gender difference from total identification with a maternal nature, the danger is that they will lose their poetic voices and be as silent as the buried Lucy. It is possible that Oliver's persona-beyond-gender is a response to concerns like Homans's; Oliver may avoid identification as a *woman* poet in order to guarantee identification as a *poet*. Homans's cautions do not take into account the central environmental precept which insists that Nature does have consciousness and perhaps even a kind of language. The speaker of "Sleeping in the Forest," while quiescent, is much livelier than Lucy, and the goddess in "Flower Moon--How She Travels" is "crying out / the words necessary to birth." Homans's dismissal of biological production in favor of literary production is an insufficient poetic for the theme of reproductive anxiety.

Both of these poems come from Oliver's 1979 collection Twelve Moons, the title of which is evocative of the lunar cycles associated with goddess-based religions (and also of sentimentalized American Indian lore). Oliver alludes to a more specific goddess, Isis, in "The Oak Tree at the Entrance to Blackwater Pond." In this poem, she complicates the idea of ultimate natural rejuvenation by refusing to let it console her own particular loss. The deadfall of her favorite oak tree is "like the coffin of Osiris," and its death saddens her despite the intellectual knowledge that the tree lives on in the recyclings of the natural world. The notion of recycling as a kind of afterlife is common

in environmental poetry and despite her rejection of it here Oliver makes its ecological basis clear:

But, listen, I'm tired of that brazen promise:
 death and resurrection.
 I'm tired of hearing how the nitrogens will return
 to the earth again,
 through the hinterland of patience--
 how the mushrooms and the yeasts
 will arrive in the wind--¹⁴

The death of the tree is linked to human death when Oliver calls it the "tree of my own sad, mortal heart," and the environmental aspect of this poem lies more in this emotional connection with the natural world than with the vision of nature goddesses. In some ways this poem encapsulates the tension of Oliver's essentialist concerns. Her rejection of the universal resurrection, whether in a traditional spiritual sense or through environmentally recycled redemption, betrays an obstinate personal attachment to an individual and specific entity. Something of a plaintive personal voice seeps through in the repeated complaints of "I'm tired," as if Oliver were tired of rising above personal pain to the level of anonymous Art.

¹⁴ Mary Oliver, House of Light (Boston: Beacon, 1990) 52. Hereafter abbreviated HL.

One is reminded of other personally-felt trees in an earlier poem, "University Hospital, Boston." Again in this poem we see the conflict between the personal and the anonymous universal:

The trees on the hospital lawn
are lush and thriving. They too
are getting the best of care,
like you, and the anonymous many,
in the clean rooms high above this city (AP 42).

"University Hospital, Boston" has more narrative movement than most of Oliver's poems: it describes a visit to an ailing loved one. Trees continue to be associated with personal emotion: the beloved must recover "because my life without you would be / a place of parched and broken trees" (AP 43). Uncharacteristically, and despite a meditation on the anonymous many who have faced death in the hospital, the poem ends with a declaration of personal love. Both "University Hospital, Boston" and "The Oak Tree at the Entrance to Blackwater Pond" mark their personal significance in their geographically specific titles. "The Black Walnut Tree" also features a specific tree in the context of a personal relationship; the poem describes a "debate" with the speaker's mother about whether or not to sell a tree for firewood. The poem presents a conflict between a historical and cultural heritage ("my fathers out of Bohemia") and a specific personal difficulty ("the whip- / crack of the mortgage") (TM 56-57). The tensions in such poems between the personal and the universal point to some of the conflicts that arise from Oliver's conception of an essentialized and metapersonal Artist.

Although Oliver has written several personal poems about her family,¹⁵ she more frequently writes of spiritualized animal families, specifically animal madonnas. These animal madonnas are even more prominent than more traditionally mythological goddess figures in Oliver's work. Janet McNew has noted that Oliver's mother animals often exemplify "enviable virtues of connectedness," which is true (73), but my focus here is to show how this connectedness is part of a range of numinous qualities assigned to these inhuman madonnas. Oliver's association of the maternal and the sacred is obvious in many of her animal mother poems. In "The Fawn," she sees a doe and fawn in the woods on a Sunday morning and calls them "a joyful text" while church bells ring in the distance. Their departure is "the going forth of the blessed" and their presence causes her to ask "Oh what is holiness?" (TM 13). In "Cold Moon-- Hannah's Children," Oliver describes a goat about to give birth. Her eyes are "Old as the stones / of Greece, of the mountains" and they look "Inward. Inward / To the sacred groves" (TM 61). Through the use of traditional religious language for images of maternal animals, Oliver almost subversively blends her commitment to traditional artistic conventions with an ecofeminist sensibility. The notion of a Holy Madonna which is also animal, the very definition of soulless matter, is subversive. European Christian art traditionally celebrates the Madonna as universal mother and worships her reproductive function in giving birth to Christ. Mary is also worshipped, however, for her transcendence of bodily existence according to the doctrines of immaculate conception, perpetual virginity, and

¹⁵ See, for example, "The River Styx, Ohio," "Ice," "Strawberry Moon," and "A Visitor." All are collected in New and Selected Poems (Boston: Beacon, 1992). Hereafter abbreviated NSP.

assumption into heaven. This last doctrine, that of Mary's assumption into heaven without undergoing the physical processes of death, becomes particularly important in the context of Oliver's poems, which present animal Madonnas as Christic redeemers of death. Julia Kristeva notes that the belief in the assumption of Mary, while popularly held in various places beginning in the fourth century, became official Catholic dogma only in 1950. Kristeva suggests that this *imprimatur* was a response to the "death anguish" following World War II (169). Kristeva's suggested connection links contemporary Madonna figures to social anxieties about human extinction arising from the genocides and atomic bombings of World War II.

In her 1986 volume Dream Work, Oliver includes two poems in which maternal imagery explicitly transforms animals into earth mother figures. In "The Turtle," Oliver highlights the instinctual drives of an egg-laying turtle, who is "filled / with an old blind wish" and "can't see / herself apart from the rest of the world":

she is a part of the pond she lives in,
the tall trees are her children,
the birds that swim above her
are tied to her by an unbreakable string.¹⁶

The interconnectedness of the turtle, the pond, the trees, and the birds points to the environmental holism of an ecosystem as well as to a spiritual family of living beings.

¹⁶ Mary Oliver, Dream Work (NY: Atlantic Monthly, 1986) 57-58. Hereafter abbreviated DW.

Since turtles are amphibians, the umbilical image in the last line emphasizes the metaphorical intent of this stanza. This surrealistic umbilical imagery appears again in a darker earth-mother poem, "The Shark," perhaps more correctly called a sea-mother poem. "The Shark" describes the violent killing of a shark in terms of torture and crucifixion. The shark is described maternally:

The domed head rose above the water, white
as a spill of milk. It had taken the hook. It swirled,
and all they could see then was the grinding
and breaking of water, its thrashing, the teeth
in the grin and grotto of its impossible mouth.
The line they refused to cut ran down like a birth cord
into the packed and strategic muscles.

The spilling milk and the birth cord are obvious maternal images. The struggles of the shark are reminiscent of birth throes, particularly "the grinding / and breaking of water." Even the image of the grotto calls to mind various Renaissance depictions of the Madonna. That such associations are deliberate is suggested by a rare instance of self-reflexiveness in Oliver; "[t]he [poetic] line they refused to cut" leads to the "strategic" muscle of the poem.

Oliver's strategic use of surrealistic imagery to conflate classes of biological being connects the turtle and the shark with mammalian maternity. In doing so, she suggests that the sacred maternal function transcends species differences. At times, this transcendence goes further and establishes interspecies relationships. In her essay

"Staying Alive." for example, she describes herself nursing from her housecat: "Once I put my face against the body of our cat as she lay with her kittens, and she did not seem to mind. So I pursed my lips against that full moon, and I tasted the rich river of her body" (BP 65). That the cat didn't mind further suggests that interspecies relationships are natural, and resistance to them a human failing. The image of the full moon here reconnects trans-species maternity with the idea of goddesses found in Twelve Moons.

Maternity is not a sure salvation, however. The second part of "The Shark" describes the "white / retching thing" being brought to shore:

as it sang its death song of vomit and bubbles,
as the blood ran from its mouth
that had no speech to rail against this matter--

speech, that gives us all there may be of the future--
speech, that makes all the difference, we like to say.
And I say: in the wilderness of our wit
we will all cry out last words-- heave and spit them
into the shattering universe someday, to someone. (DW 69)

Speech in this context represents the human, but Oliver undermines that distinction in these stanzas. Speech that "rail[s] against . . . matter" is the speech of those who would abuse the environment, those who do not value the actual and material. It is also the speech of those who would consider the death of another creature a mere "matter." And in the face of death, the future may be as empty as the words of these railers. The belief

that linguistic ability divides human from animal, that it "makes all the difference," is undercut by Oliver, not only by the way she underlines its anthropocentrism ("we like to say") but by her association of wit with wilderness and her emphasis on the mortality of the human as well as the nonhuman. In this way, "The Shark" questions the sufficiency of environmentalism and of poetry.

The insufficiency of both environmental good intentions and human speech is suggested in the title essay of Blue Pastures, in which Oliver rather ineffectually urges some bloodthirsty young men to forego an attack on an ailing shark too near the shore: "I shouted--why would they hurt it? They paid no attention, and the shark slid away, and then returned again. I shouted a second time--I wrung my hands" (25). "The Shark" continues with the disturbing assurance that human last words will go as unheeded as the shark's: "Whoever He is, count on it: He won't answer." This "He" (God?)

is lost in his work. All else is peripheral.

remote, unfelt. The connections have been broken.

Consider the evening:

the shark winched into the air; men

lifting the last bloody hammers.

And Him, somewhere, ponderously lifting another world,

setting it free to spin, if it can,

in a darkness you can't imagine. (DW 70)

The destruction of the connections between living creatures valued in "The Turtle" has resulted here in an image of damnation and apocalypse--the mutilated body of the shark spinning beside a spinning planet. The "bloody hammers" make this a scene of crucifixion which is especially apt in the context of Christian associations with fishermen, who are here called "hunters" in a significant shift of nomenclature. Disregard for the natural world, here figured in a maternal animal image, has brought about the end of the world.

In an article on Oliver's poetry, Diane Bonds cites "The Shark" as an example of the way Oliver "employs the terms of patriarchal Christianity to repudiate a dualistic and sometimes otherworldly ideology which splits or separates human and nonhuman nature, spirit and matter, signified and signifier" (8). Both Bonds and McNew find in Oliver resonances with French theorist Luce Irigaray's description of "La Mystérique." Irigaray punningly coined the term "La Mystérique" in Speculum of the Other Woman to convey the resonances of mysticism, hysteria, mystery, and femininity she finds in the discourses of Western female mystics. Irigaray finds that it is through such discourses that women experience *jouissance*, which in her essay is loosely defined in terms of both sexuality and spiritual enlightenment as a kind of general ecstasy marked by the crossing of subject/object boundaries. Irigaray considers this distinctively feminine discourse to be part of a critique of rationalism, and in that regard generally aligned with deconstructive thought. Mystic discourse, according to Irigaray, is

the place where "she"--and in some cases he, if he follows "her"

lead--speaks about the dazzling glare which comes from the source of

light that has been logically repressed, about "subject" and "Other"
 flowing out into an embrace of fire that mingles one term into another,
 about contempt for form as such, about mistrust for understanding as an
 obstacle along the path of *jouissance* and mistrust for the dry desolation of
 reason (191).

In aligning Oliver's work with Irigaray's, Bonds and McNew fail to consider the context in which Irigaray is writing. The concept of *jouissance* originates in the 1970s work of French feminists who were attempting to define *fémininité* in the wake of deconstruction.¹⁷ Oliver's insistence on language as a transparent medium will have nothing to do with deconstruction. This insistence is in fact one of the weaknesses of her poetry, which is very rarely complicated with wordplay, nuance, or ambiguity. Oliver states in A Poetry Handbook, a very *jouissance*-free text, that "language, as one naturally knows language, is the medium that will be quick and living--the serviceable clay of one's thoughts" (16-17). An analogy could be made between the nearly constant transgressive *jouissance* of *écriture féminine* and Oliver's nearly constant bliss in nature, what reviewer David Barber calls her "headlong breathlessness" and "delirious immersion in wood and swamp and creaturehood" (234). Irigaray's swooning *mystérique* does sound at times like the speaker of "Sleeping in the Forest" and other poems:

¹⁷ French feminism is far too lengthy a discursion to incorporate here, and exemplary and critical materials on French feminism are legion. One good starting place is the anthology edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron.

Hiding them [the swoons of *jouissance*] one moment. flaunting them the next. Intending to keep them secret, not able to do so always, or anymore. when these violent attacks go through her, though alien to her. Sometimes they shake her, at other times they leave her prostrate, pale, like a dead woman. Stretched out, once again, (on) the ground. In the dark. Always without consciousness (Irigaray 198-99).

I suspect, however, that any resemblance between the two is due more to the poetic language of the French theorists than to any cloaked deconstructivism in Oliver. Janet Warman made a very similar argument in her dissertation on Oliver wherein she suggests that Oliver's investment in Keatsian negative capability is identical to a Cixousian "capacity to deappropriate herself without self interest" (qtd. in Warman, 66). Warman is mistaken for the same reasons that Bonds and McNew are, but the repeated attempts to connect Oliver to *l'écriture féminine* are further responses to the essentialism I find in Oliver's work.

Oliver's poems of transcendent communion with various animals do challenge subject/object boundaries, and their emphasis on trans-species communication can be seen as a problematization of language boundaries as well. These ideas in Oliver's work, however, are located at a thematic level, not at the structural level of linguistics and psychology which Irigaray critiques. Oliver's greatest participation in the question of subject/object boundaries is her conception of her poems' speaker(s) discussed earlier in this chapter. She sees the ubiquitous "I" of her poems as a vantage point supplied to the reader through which he or she can experience the "felt-experience" of the poem. She

believes in "letting the poet vanish" through Keatsian negative capability, thereby writing poems. she says, "that don't give news to the reader of myself, but give news to the reader of the reader." In direct contradiction of the theory of *l'écriture féminine*, Oliver denies that "very top-flight artists" are affected by gender difference at all ("Against").

The tone of poetic spirituality suffusing "*La Mystérique*" does resonate with Oliver's work. Irigaray describes the mystic's view of Christ as "[t]hat most female of men" and depicts the body of Christ as feminized through its acquisition and possession of yonic wounds; "the gashes in his virgin flesh" are "that slit where I recognize myself, by touching myself there (almost) directly" (199-200). This passage resonates with the Christic maternal owls prevalent in Oliver's work, where they are presented as female redeemers.

Owls, along with deer and bears, are recurring symbolic figures for Oliver, as well as being always presented at least to some degree naturalistically. Mother owls appear in these poems as predators who redeem death by killing to preserve new life. The mother owls are part of a balance between life and death which is natural, environmentally beneficial, and in some sense sacred. In one poem, Oliver says, "An owl cried in the distance, / I thought of Jesus..." (HL 57). In "Praise," the speaker pities the owl's prey ("it stabs my heart / whenever something cries out") but the same time finds it "wonderful" that the owl's chicks "are starting to fatten." It is not only this particular brood who are served by the necessary deaths of the prey, but the owls as a species. The growing young owls "beat their muscular wings, / they dream of flying / for another million years" as "the world's roughage / ...bleeds and deepens" (HL 46-47). In "Bowing

to the Empress," a mother owl returns to her chicks with red meat "and you know their is a decent task":

They are what keeps everything
 enough, but not too many--
 and so you bow
 to the lightning of her eyes. (DW 55)

This redeeming of death through its service to life is conflated with traditional ideas of resurrection and reincarnation. Oliver's most prominent image for this complex of ideas is the natural food chain in which each death serves to promote another life. Oliver writes at some length of owls as both spiritual and environmental predators in Blue Pastures, where she calls them "the pure wild hunters of our world" (20). Both Diane Bonds and Janet McNew have written of Oliver's food chains as eucharistic celebrations of holistic interconnectedness. Oliver emphasizes that "[t]he world where the owl is endlessly hungry and endlessly on the hunt is the world in which I live too. There is only one world" (BP 20). Her holistic insistence on a singular and interconnected world reflects the ecofeminist tenet that the material and the spiritual are one.

W. John Coletta finds that "Oliver searches for a reconciliation of the predator-prey relationship in religious . . . terms" (110). In "Bone Poem," for example, an owl drops regurgitated bones ("shrapnel // Of rat bones, gull debris") into the leaves beneath a tree:

Where time stirs with her slow spoon,

Where *we* becomes singular. and a quickening

From light-years away

Saves and maintains. O holy

Protein, o hallowed lime,

O precious clay!

The poem concludes: "The rat will learn to fly, the owl / Will be devoured" (TM 46).

The stirring spoon alludes to the notion of a cauldron as a mystical symbol of transformation, here rendered environmental through references to the slow time of decomposition.

Coletta feels that Oliver's poetry utilizes "meta-indices," which are "a kind of literal metaphor" (12): "The meta-index is a highly condensed image of transformation which achieves metaphoric status because it 'says' or 'sees' one thing as another, as all metaphors do; the things it 'sees' or 'says' together, however, have already been biologically 'seen' or 'said' together as the result of biological adaptation or mimicry" (10). Coletta's example is Oliver's poem "Egrets" (AP 19) in which reeds "wrinkled" into egrets. Because real egrets do camouflage themselves in real reeds, Oliver's metaphor is also a meta-index pointing to a real, non-poetic relationship. This theory is perhaps more creative on Coletta's part than on Oliver's, and may be an elaborate way to say that Oliver's poems draw heavily on traditional imagery. His theory is worth noting, however, since Coletta later argues that all such metaphors have a biological origin in the

predator-prey relationship so important in Oliver's work. "[J]ust as humans either 'get' or don't 'get' a figure, just as they may or may not recognize the metaphoricity of an utterance . . . animal predators either see or don't see the egret. . . . Survival is contingent on a species' ability to read the landscape" (Coletta 29-30).¹⁸

The predator-prey metaphor in poetry has traditionally been sexual and featured a male predator and female prey; one thinks of Wyatt's "They Flee From Me" or "Whoso List to Hunt."¹⁹ Like Oliver, A. R. Ammons environmentalizes the predator/prey trope when he writes "it's not our interest / to exhaust the host earth: / the predator / husbands his prey" (Tape 114). Unlike Ammons and Wyatt, Oliver does not eroticize the predator-prey relationship. Feminist critic Patricia Yaeger reads the predation and consumption in many of Oliver's poems as an image of female orality consuming male language and incorporating it into a joyous female textuality. Yaeger does not address issues of reproduction and maternity in Oliver's poetry, but she emphasizes the importance place images of predation hold. Whether linguistic or literal, the violence of Oliver's predators is a reversal of stereotypical gender associations. In an article on

¹⁸ The notion of the meta-index is also similar to the notion of literalized metaphors which are prevalent in discourses of reproductive anxiety, but more on this later.

¹⁹ Of course, Wyatt's poems and most others like them presume a predator-prey relationship involving at least one human--in other words, hunting. Gary Snyder and some other "paraprimitives" valorize hunting as an activity requiring the human hunter to enter a state of mind which is attuned to the natural world. Leonard Lutwack historicized this motif in American literature: "American literature is noted for the high value it places on the hunt. . . . The degradation of the hunting motif occurs in the manhunt, a subject with a long history in America beginning with the revengeful hunt for marauding Indians . . . and continuing with the hunt for runaway slaves" (211).

maternal monsters in film, Lynda Zwinger notes "the blood and guts of the still-unspeakable violence of even metaphoric mothering" (87). The violence of the predator-prey relationship features literal blood and guts. Nor are crucifixions without their share of gore. All of these associations contribute to the effectiveness of Oliver's Christic maternal owl imagery.

Another Christic predator-prey relationship is found in the legend of the unicorn. According to the legend, the unicorn allows himself to be captured by a virgin maid just as Christ allowed himself to be born of the Virgin Mary. Once captured and killed, the unicorn is reborn as a faithful bridegroom.²⁰ Something of this mystical flavor is present in Oliver's poems about meeting deer. Deer, particularly does, become something quite close to forest goddesses in Oliver's poetry; her deer are her most anthropomorphized animal characters. A prime example is "A Meeting." The first half of the poem describes a doe giving birth in a swamp. Later, says the speaker,

I meet them.

I can only stare.

She is the most beautiful woman

I have ever seen.

Her child leaps among the flowers,

²⁰ The most famous example of this widespread legend is not in a book *per se*, but in the Unicorn tapestries on display in the Cloisters in New York City.

the blue of the sky falls over me

like silk, the flowers burn, and I want

to live my life all over again, to begin again,

to be utterly

wild (AP 63).

That the doe is called a "woman" and the fawn a "child" emphasizes the connection between human speaker and animal creatures, yet this anthropomorphic connection works in two directions at once. The deer may seem human, but the human wants "to be utterly . wild." The flowers surrounding the fawn are the same flowers that burn. The fawn-child's leap coincides with the speaker's desire to change her life. The vast image of "the blue of the sky" indicates that the joy inspired by the animals spreads beyond the individual speaker and throughout the world. The holistic interconnection implied in this view of the world is an important environmental value as well as a religious vision. The significance of these anthropomorphic portraits of deer is suggested by their frequency in Oliver's work. Her most recent volume of poetry features another deer-woman, who has taken the speaker's favorite resting spot under some trees:

but a beautiful woman

who had thought of it first

was lying casually

just where I'd thought to lie down

don't move I said
 but she rose up
 on her pretty hooves
 at the sound of my voice
 and heavily
 and with sorrow and with panic
 she vanished
 into the trees.²¹

The sorrow and panic of the anthropomorphized deer here reflects the ecofeminist's sorrow and panic at the "vanished" wildlife, displaced by less considerate human interlopers.

Anthropomorphism of this type is a hotly debated topic in environmentalism. Traditionally, environmentalists have discouraged anthropomorphic identification on the grounds that such identification anthropocentrically skews any understanding of the natural world. Val Plumwood has cautioned against what she calls anthropomorphic "indistinguishability": "[W]e need to recognize not only our human continuity with the natural world but also its distinctness and independence from us and the distinctness of the needs of things in nature from ours" ("Nature" 13). Such a formulation seems to assume that human beings are separate from nature, however, which undercuts a basic

²¹ Mary Oliver, White Pine: Poems and Prose Poems (San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1994) 33. Hereafter abbreviated WP.

environmental premise of holistic unity between humans and the rest of the natural world.

In an article on anthropomorphism in Romantic poetry, Onno Dag Oerlemans argues for anthropomorphism as an environmental technique:

In seeing signs of subjectivity in animals, we are not necessarily projecting human qualities onto them, but recognizing in them natural attributes which we share with them. Writing this sympathy off as merely the projection of human characteristics--which the very introduction of the concept of anthropomorphism has the effect of doing--errs not only in its underestimation of animal being, but in its extraordinary exaggeration and deification of human being (12).

Philosopher Neil Evernden notes that contemporary notions of anthropomorphism reverse what was originally the heresy of ascribing human characteristics to God:

"Anthropomorphism still is heretical. . . . [N]ow, in the age of secular humanism, it is an affront to humans to have their form given to what are called 'subhumans'" (53).²²

That Oliver holds her deer-women as semi-deified creatures is clear both from their prevalence in her work and the sacred qualities she assigns to them. We have already seen the sacred nature of the deer and fawn in "The Fawn." In "The Pinewoods."

²² Evernden notes some interesting societal inconsistencies in this conception of anthropomorphism: "[O]ne could reasonably argue that all medical research is based on the tacitly accepted legitimacy of . . . anthropomorphism" (54). For further explorations of anthropomorphism and scientific research, see the work of Donna Haraway.

she claims that an encounter with a deer who touched her changed her life, using the language of spiritual conversion:

and I have been, ever since,
separated from my old, comfortable life

of experience and deduction--

I have been, ever since,
exalted--

and even now,

though I miss the world

I would not go back--

I would not be anywhere else

but stalled in the happiness

of the miracle--

every morning

I stroll out into the fields,

I believe in everything-- (WP 13-14)

The deer deity is a comforting, nurturing, maternal goddess figure. The use of the word "stalled" subtly implies that the speaker is herself an animal, perhaps housed in a visionary barnyard adjacent to the many mansions. In "Picking Blueberries, Austerlitz.

New York, 1957," another anthropomorphized deer ("Beautiful girl") offers Oliver "the damp touch of her solicitude" (NSP 13).

Charming as these dear deer mothers may be, there are limits to the power of this anthropomorphic strategy, and Oliver crosses them when she tries to move these maternal symbols from the personal realm to the larger stage of political history. In "1945-1985: Poem for the Anniversary," Oliver tries to draw a parallel between the death and destruction of the Holocaust and the danger her dog poses to a fawn met in the woods. She grants situational insight to the doe, whose inattention while grazing allows the dog to threaten the fawn in the first place. After a description of Mengele at a picnic, the poem ends with the doe smelling the dog on the fawn: "Then she knew everything. . . The forest grew dark. // She nuzzled her child wildly" (DW 83). The implication that a lack of maternal attention leads to tragedy is both trite and insufficient in the context of the Holocaust.²³

Perhaps realizing this, Oliver subsequently published what appear to be two different revisions of this poem under the titles "Beside the Waterfall" and "Dogs." The differences between the poems are many, but the most important one is that both revisions are far more violent than "Poem for the Anniversary." In "Beside the Waterfall" the dog succeeds in eating the fawn. "Poem for the Anniversary" dichotomized the frolicking world of nature where dog, fawn, and doe remain innocent and ignorant of human evil and the dangerous and deceptive world of cultured gardens where Nazis lurk.

²³ This is of course my reading. In a review of Dream Work, Alicia Ostriker cites "Poem for the Anniversary" as a fine example of emotional maturity (150).

The speaker's goal was to live in the world in a way that "wouldn't hurt anything" (DW 81), thereby aligning herself with the benign natural world. "Beside the Waterfall" complicates this simplistic and schematic view of good nature and evil culture, a view that was insufficient for the historical theme of the poem. In "Beside the Waterfall," the dog finds and eats "the beautiful flower-like head" of a dead fawn. As the sun rises, the speaker realizes her kind-eyed dog also has a face "like a flower" and with this realization the sun drops "its wild, clawed light / over everything" (WP 6-7). In the earlier version, the symbolic predator's claw was localized in a German context: "Germany / shows again its iron claw, which / . . . / did, / slowly, for years, scrape across Europe" (DW 82). The revised version expands this vision of purely destructive predation from the cultural context of Germany to the entire natural world. The symbolic revelations of sunrise are the presence of evil in the quotidian, even in one's own dog or self. Even the political resonances of Nazi Germany have been reversed; in "Beside the Waterfall" the allied dog is named Winston. While its lack of specific reference to the Holocaust detracts from the commemorative function of "Poem for the Anniversary," "Beside the Waterfall" is much the better of the two poems. Death on the scale of the Holocaust cannot be poetically redeemed by a personal mythology of semi-deified animal mothers.

"Dogs" is an even darker version, although it no longer refers to World War II. In "Dogs," a pack of dogs ("my own two darlings / among them") attack a male deer. The dogs are violent and vicious: "screaming" and "lunging and buckling" in their pursuit. The deer escapes; "[t]he dogs / moaned and screeched" in frustration and then napped

until sunset when they approach the speaker "in their old good natures." The realization of evil comes when the speaker looks into the dogs' eyes, "bright as planets":

here is such happiness when you speak their names!

here is such unforced love!

.

here is hope retching, the world as it is

The darkness of a sunset (rather than sunrise) realization, the strength of the hunting narrative, and the powerful image of "hope retching" within the micro- and macrocosmic space of the eye and the planet combine to make "Dogs" the most successful of the three poems. It is worth noting, however, that in this entirely male hunt there is no hint of the Christic predator. Death without a maternal savior is merely momentarily escaped, not redeemed. The absence of proselytizing in this poem strengthens its careful observation that personal affections are insufficient in the face of evil, but also tends to essentialize that evil as inherent in the dogs (and our other various darlings), much as the more maternal poems essentialized good.

Perhaps Oliver's most essentialized mothers are to be found in her many poems of maternal bears. Oliver's maternal bears are life-forces, balancing her death-dealing maternal owls. In many poems, the instinctive behavior of bears giving birth during hibernation is presented as the force of seasonal springtime rebirth on a literal level and spiritual rebirth on a symbolic level. Unlike the deer, which shapeshift into human female form, female bears are superhuman. They are elemental forces: wind, rain, earth, and rivers. Oliver often presents herself as merging with the bears and becoming one

with the elements, a gesture of identification with the earth that is surely environmental. In her dissertation on Oliver, Janet Warman finds that Oliver "expresses a desire to unite with the primordial Mother" (63). She comes closest to doing this in her bear poems.

In "Winter Sleep," Oliver fantasizes about hibernating with a female bear, wishing to "lie with her, cradled. Like two souls." This sleep is not uneventful, even when no actual birth takes place: "We would wake and tell / How we longed for the spring." "We would turn and turn / Until we heard our lips in unison sighing // The family name" (TM 53). Note that this relatedness is nonvolitional: they don't deliberately speak to each other. Instead they hear themselves communicating, as if this communication is a natural event, which in Oliver's view, it is. In "Snow Moon--Black Bear Gives Birth," the mother bear is herself the earth. She turns "[o]ut of the black wave of sleep" like a landform emerging from the primordial ocean. The cubs are "blind pink islands," smaller landmasses. The mother bear lies "beside them like a horizon." When she nursed the cubs, "she / gave them / the rich river" (TM 74).

This image of the mother bear as the springtime earth life-force becomes more explicit and deliberate in "Driving Through the Wind River Reservation: A Poem of Black Bear." Here, winter is personified as a male figure "snapping off the cold pines, gasping, / rearranging over and over / the enormous drifts." The bear watches him and waits: "Well, she thought, he'll wear himself out / running around like that." The coming of the spring is both the defeat of the male winter and the victory of the female life-force:

the sun rose up like a pot of blood
and his knees buckled.

Well, she whispered from the leaves,
 that's that. In the distance
 the ice began to boom and wrinkle
 and a dampness
 that could not be defeated began
 to come from her, her breathing
 enlarged, oh, tender mountain, she rearranged
 herself so that the cubs
 could slide from her body, so that the rivers
 would flow. (DW 31)

One of the striking features of these bear-as-earth-mother poems is their parthenogenetic frame. Sure, the bear mother gives birth, but she's never impregnated. There is a suggestion of sexuality in the turning and snuggling of "Winter Sleep," but even that is undercut when the sleepers are described as "Two old sisters familiar to each other / As cups in a cupboard" (TM 53). In fact, this very homely image is out of place in the poem and with the rest of the natural woodland scenery, as if it was put there specifically to rule out any sexual interpretation. It would make sense mythologically if the spring spirit of the mother bear were fertilized by the male spirit of winter, but winter is a violent, patriarchal figure, "a tall white bone / with thick shoulders, like a wrestler, roaring" (DW 31). He destroys the trees. The bear mother does not engage him; she only "peered / through the loose bark and saw him" (DW 31). Although the male winter and the spring mother bear are paralleled because they both "rearrange" things--he the

snowdrifts, she her body to give birth--they are adversaries rather than partners and spring only takes over when winter's knees "buckle" in defeat.²⁴ The only explicit animal impregnation in Oliver's work is in "Spring," where the breeding of a mare is described as an occasion for humiliation, commerce, and pity (for the mare) (TM 10). It is possible that Oliver's parthenogenetic animal earth mothers are meant to be Dianic virgin goddesses of the wilderness. Such a formulation, however, suggests a very shallow mythical rendering, as Annis Pratt and many others have pointed out that Artemis figures are fundamentally virginal in the sense of being beyond male control, and are not virgins in a literal physical sense. It is likely, given her many Christian references, that Oliver is conflating earth-goddess mythologies with the figure of the Virgin Mary, continuing her ecofeminist subversion of the Madonna figure discussed earlier. However, in her primordial bears we see most strongly how the dissonance of the conflicting archetypes of virgin and mother and the absence of any male generative figure undercut Oliver's attempts to symbolize a fecund and regenerative nature through her animal madonnas.

One of Barber's criticisms of Oliver's New and Selected Poems is that "her recurring owls and bears and snakes have turned totem" (235). With the term "totem," he is alluding to the intense spirituality surrounding animal images in her work, lending some of her poems a pseudo-Native American tone. Unlike Gary Snyder and other poets who use the imagery of Native American mythologies with some awareness of their complexity, Oliver's use of this material is shallow and superficial. The bear, for

²⁴ In contrast, note Gary Snyder's work on Native American mythologies in which women marry bears.

example, carries many different symbolic meanings in different Native American mythologies; for Oliver she is a general earth-mother-goddess-animal. This is typical of dominant American culture's homogenization of the diversity of Native American peoples into a generalized "Indian" stereotype.

One disheartening exception to Oliver's displacement of human reproductive concerns onto animal figures is her tendency to address fears for the human species through stereotyped figures of Native Americans. As discussed in the previous chapter, the stereotype of the "ecological Indian" has been pervasive in the environmental movement. Furthermore, the history of genocide suffered by Native Americans on this continent serves as an American case study for fears of human extinction. Oliver's use of these stereotypes unfortunately renders her Native American imagery a kind of special category of her animal imagery, since it functions in exactly the same way in her poetry as a focus for displacement of environmental and reproductive concerns.

Where this relates to Oliver's environmental reproductive anxiety is in her use of the figure of the "ecological Indian." The "ecological Indian" is a contemporary version of the Noble Savage stereotype which emphasizes the supposed inherent environmentalism of Native American peoples, thereby connecting Native Americans in an essentialist fashion to nature, and connecting the genocide of Native Americans to the destruction of nature deplored by environmentalism.²⁵ An example is the 1970s advertising campaign for Keep America Beautiful, Inc., which featured Cherokee actor Iron Eyes Cody weeping over the pollution of America.

²⁵ This is a complex topic of its own. See Berkhofer, Castro, and Lutts.

Oliver consistently depicts Native Americans as one with the natural animal world. In "Wings," she associates her preservation of some fox bones with the controversial preservation of Native American remains in museums. Her connection of these museums with Washington implies governmental responsibility for both genocide and pollution (WP 52). In "Two Kinds of Deliverance," animals travel "to the secret lodges" and the Native American man wears "a vest made / from the skin of some animal" (DW 61). His dancing moves the trees. Oliver is here critically recounting an elementary school presentation on the Indian, but her attempts to reveal its racism are undermined by her own romanticized stereotyping:

As for the pain
of others, of course it tries to be
abstract, but then

there flares up out of a vanished wilderness, like fire,
still blistering: the wrinkled face
of an old Chippewa
smiling, hating us,
dancing for his life. (DW 62)

As an attempt at making the pain of others concrete, this fails miserably, since her memory of the individual who performed for their classroom is conflated with the epic "vanished wilderness" of Noble Savagery. In a gesture akin to her many redemptions of death by animal mothers, Oliver implies a phoenix-like quality to that fiery flaring-up:

the nature scenes that begin the poem indicate that the wilderness hasn't really vanished after all.

Oliver's recuperation of both the despoiled environment and the genocide of Native Americans, reminiscent of her attempt to recuperate the Holocaust in "1945-1985: Poem for the Anniversary," is most pronounced in "Ghosts." "Ghosts" is a poem about Western expansion and the destruction of the buffalo. Oliver devotes one stanza to environmental outrage, describing the bloody wholesale slaughter of the buffalo by hunters shooting from train windows. In the rest of the poem, however, she tries to recuperate this destruction with an animal Madonna image of a buffalo nativity, complete with a request for room at the inn:

Once only, and then in a dream,
I watched while, secretly
and with the tenderness of any caring woman,
a cow gave birth
to a red calf, tongued him dry and nursed him
in a warm corner
of the clear night
in the fragrant grass
in the wild domains
of the prairie spring, and I asked them,
in my dream I knelt down and asked them
to make room for me (AP 30).

Unlike Oliver's other animal Madonna scenes, this one is specified as a dream. Her plaintive request to be included is a desperate strategy to establish the joyful connectedness she strives for with these images, but in this context the final line is bitterly ironic. The destruction of the prairie ecosystem, including the buffalo, was conducted precisely "to make room for" Western expansion.

Most disturbing about this poem is its offhand use of Sioux imagery to bolster its mythical, eternal tone. The fate of the Sioux under Western expansion is not directly addressed in the poem. In the same stanza where she notes that buffalo droppings fertilized the prairie grasses, the speaker notes that "the rain / falls soft as the fall of moccasins" (AP 29-30). One could read into the description of the hunters in the train an implied contrast with the less destructive hunting practices of the Sioux.²⁶ The Sioux are explicitly mentioned only once, in the fourth stanza:

In the book of the earth it is written:

nothing can die.

In the book of the Sioux it is written:

they have gone away into the earth to hide.

Nothing will coax them out again

but the people dancing. (AP 29).

²⁶ However, the popular notion that Native American economies were environmentally irreproachable has been challenged. See Martin Lewis.

In this stanza, the culture of the Sioux is paralleled to the nebulous "book of the earth." Given the title of the poem, the reference to "the people dancing" would seem to be a reference to the Ghost Dance of the Sioux, a 19th-century sacred ritual and cultural movement intended to protect the Sioux from the physical and cultural ravages of Western expansion.²⁷ The tensions surrounding the historical Ghost Dances were significant factors in the murder of Sitting Bull and of over 100 Sioux at Wounded Knee. Oliver's use of the Ghost Dance motif seems facile and trivializing, especially since her poem culminates not in a vision of communal restoration but in a plea for merely personal salvation: "make room for me."

Oliver's most explicit image of the ecological Indian is found in "Tecumseh," where she reminds us that Tecumseh's battles were fought on the same land that is now polluted. Oliver associates her own death wish, as exemplified in drinking toxic water and wishing to die, with Tecumseh's struggle:

I knelt and drank from that crumpled flow, call it
 what madness you will, there's a sickness
 worse than the risk of death and that's
 forgetting what we should never forget.
 Tecumseh lived here.
 The wounds of the past
 are ignored, but hang on

²⁷ References to the Ghost Dance movement of the 19th century constitute a minor motif in environmental poetry, and also appear in the work of Hogan and Snyder.

like the litter that snags among the yellow branches.

newspapers and plastic bags, after the rains.

Where are the Shawnee now?

Do you know? Or would you have to

write to Washington, and even then,

whatever they said,

would you believe it? Sometimes

I would like to paint my body red and go out into

the glittering snow

to die. (AP 77).

Michael Castro notes that the Noble Savage stereotype tends to portray the Native American "in terms of his death," a tendency borne out in most of Oliver's ecological Indian poems (xvii). Here, however, the emphasis on death gives way to the recuperative gesture I see as typical of her environmental reproductive anxiety. In the second half of the poem, Oliver stresses that Tecumseh's body was never found, and suggests that "he turned into a little boy again, and leaped / into a birch canoe and went / rowing home down the rivers." This Romantic image of an immortal child is connected to the environmental truism urging us to save the earth for future generations, for our children, and is a theme more fully explored by Gary Snyder. Contemplating the reborn child-Tecumseh, Oliver concludes her poem: "this much I'm sure of: if we ever meet him

again, we'll know it, / he will still be / so angry" (AP 78). The ambivalence of the "if" and our knowledge of the genocide of Native Americans ("Where are the Shawnee now?") calls into question the fate of future human generations in our polluted environment. Oliver's desire to paint her body red and die, while perhaps a politically incorrect image, links our fate to the historical fate of Native American peoples. Her implication of a deceptive government in Washington suggests that current environmental policies are as genocidal as historical Indian policies. We shall see a very different treatment of this subject matter in the next chapter treating the work of Chickasaw poet Linda Hogan.

This chapter has endeavored to show that Oliver's poetry features redemptive images of maternal animals that in their essentialism can be read as ecofeminist. The gender essentialism of Oliver's maternal images is echoed in the racial essentialism of her use of the stereotype of the ecological Indian. However, both of these sets of images are compensatory strategies that indicate in Oliver's work a fundamental anxiety about the possibilities of personal and cultural reproduction in an ecologically-compromised environment. Thus, her reproductive anxiety undercuts her stated intent to write in the voice of a speaker beyond gender a poetry that is continuous with an essentialized notion of unchanging Art. This ideological "failure" on her part enriches a reading of her work from within a discourse of environmental reproductive anxiety.

Chapter Three: Linda Hogan: Genocide and Environmentalism²⁸

Linda Hogan is a Chickasaw poet from Oklahoma. She is widely regarded as a leading writer in Native American studies. This chapter examines the linked themes of environmentalism and the genocide of Native Americans in Hogan's poetry. "Genocide" may seem like a strong word; it seemed so to me when I first ran across it in this context. Subsequent reading, however, convinced me that its use is entirely appropriate. I make no claim to authority in Native American studies, a field well beyond the scope of this dissertation. I do want to stress, however, that Hogan is writing from that discourse and any reading of her work that ignores this context misses much of her resonance.

There is obviously no space here for an overview of Native American history, but a few details may serve to illustrate the scope of the context in which "genocide" becomes an appropriate term. Figures offered as estimates of pre-contact Native American population range from 1 million to 45 million. The 1890 US. census recorded Native American population as 250,000. Even doubling that figure to 500,000 and taking the lowest pre-contact figure of 1 million results in a halving of Native American population under colonization. By 1990, Native Americans made up about 1% of the total American population and experienced poverty and its associated health problems at a rate between 2 and 3 times the national average. In the 1980s, the rate of teenage suicide among Native Americans was several times the national average. During the 1970s, the Indian Health Service sterilized many Native Americans without their

²⁸ A version of this chapter was presented at the conference Sharp Eyes II: Multicultural Perspectives on Environmental Writing, held in June 1996 at SUNY/Oneonta.

informed consent. This practice was condemned in a GAO study and estimates of the number sterilized range from 25% to 42% percent of Native American women and 10% of Native American men.²⁹

These genocidal conditions have an environmental component as well. Native American reservation lands contain half of the known uranium deposits in the United States, but well over half of the uranium mines. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, improperly disposed radioactive wastes from these mines have seriously contaminated Navajo and Lakota lands and water supplies. Contributing factors to this contamination are nearby nuclear missile sites and alleged nuclear waste dumping by the US military. The radiation has caused an increase in birth defects, miscarriages, stillbirths, and cancer deaths among reservation residents.³⁰ A statement by the Four Directions Council to the United Nations concludes that "much of the human cost of North American uranium production has been borne, unwittingly and mostly unwillingly, by indigenous peoples." Rudolph Ryser has found overlapping organizational memberships in bigoted anti-Indian groups and the anti-environmental "wise use" movement in the western United States.

Linda Hogan has these conditions in mind when she links the genocide of Native Americans to environmental issues. In an interview, she says, "I feel that what people are

²⁹ These statistics represent my own synthesis of several sources. See Allen's The Sacred Hoop (189, hereafter abbreviated SH), Ward Churchill and Winona LaDuke's article in The State of Native America, M. Annette Jaimes's article with Theresa Halsey, Jaimes's introduction found in the same collection, and Paisano's US Census report. On Indian Health Service sterilizations, see England.

³⁰ See Churchill and LaDuke and Judith Todd.

doing from the very beginning of the mining process all the way to the final explosion is that they're taking a power out of the earth that belongs to the earth" (qtd. in Allen, SH 168-69). She is strongly anti-nuclear and believes that "most Indian people are living the crisis of American life, the toxins of chemical waste, the pain of what is repressed in white Americans" (Coltelli 75). She believes that "Native artists, writers, teachers and healers need to build and strengthen a new vision of the world that will project its intensity toward changing the dominant society, the destructive technology that is interfering with the survival of all people" ("Transformation" 409). Hogan's contextualized and historicized treatment of Native American genocide is a far more complex and eloquent theme than Mary Oliver's stereotyped "ecological Indians."

Native American critic and theorist Paula Gunn Allen finds the theme of genocide an "all-pervasive feature" of Native American poetry and cites Hogan as one of its leading articulators (SH 155-56). Hogan raises the idea of genocide in many of her poems. In "Saving," she links genocide to generations of poverty in which too many everyday commodities are saved "for best," only to waste unused. The clothes of the poor saved "for best" in the back of the closet are eaten by moths: "shirts empty of heartbeats, / all we should have lived for, / empty of arms that reach back." This personal lament becomes tribal as the arms try to reach "all the way back / behind plaster / to the old world in canyons / with blood women dancing on walls / to the earth's drum / and the mother of deer and corn . . ." The poem ends by suggesting the continuing presence of

the dead: "The invisible ones, / when we step this way / out of time. are all around us."³¹

In "All Winter," Hogan links the dead Native Americans to other decimated species, including wild horses and buffalo. This holistic and environmental interspecies link blends the pain of all, of the living and the dead: "I am in every creature / and they are in me. / My bones feel their terrible ache . . ." The spirits of the dead warn the living. They "leave fingerprints / on glass when they point out / the things that happen, / the things we might forget." Their reminders help the speaker to "remember / how the white snow / swallowed those who came before me." If one reads the swallowing white snow as a metaphor for white settlement and its impact on Native American civilizations, the title of the poem implies the continuation of white domination "All Winter." Indeed, it is the pressure of this domination that drives the speaker to insist on her connection with the natural world, since she recalls her holistic link with other creatures "[i]n the coldest weather." This snow metaphor also makes sense on the level of environmental history, since the Chickasaws originally resided in the southern part of the country and one of the features of their forced removal to Oklahoma would have been increased exposure to cold weather and snow. (Hogan writes of this forced removal in her novel Mean Spirit and in her poem "Tear.") In exchange for their warnings, Hogan speaks for the spirits through her poem: "This is what happened to the voices" (S 6).

³¹ Linda Hogan, Savings: Poems (Minneapolis: Coffee House, 1988) 4-5. Hereafter abbreviated S.

Hogan's holistic link with the dead and with other species is evident in the seamless shift in "All Winter" from the spirits of buffalo to human spirits with fingerprints. Her emphasis on ancestral influence is central to her work, particularly concerning the theme of genocide. In Hogan's view, which is informed by Native American spiritual practices, the voices of her ancestors are a fundamental prod to her poetry. In her essay "Walking," Hogan writes: "I am listening to a deeper way. Suddenly all my ancestors are behind me. Be still, they say. Watch and listen. You are the result of the love of thousands" (12). In a holistic gesture that also makes perfect evolutionary sense, Hogan extends her kinship to all living beings, thereby enabling interspecies communication.

This kinship with animals is not purely metaphorical, but is also biological. In her essay "Waking Up the Rake," Hogan describes her interactions with birds in a sanctuary. She calls the faculty of communication with the birds "a blood-written code that directs us through life." It is impossible to separate the biological from the spiritual here; the genetic "blood-written code" is also an "inner knowing" and a "vision" (350). In a sense, this conflation of the biological and spiritual is essentialist in its implications that identities, interactions, and relationships are inborn and predetermined. In another sense, however, Hogan's extension of this essential relationship across species boundaries defines the essentialized group in such a diverse manner that essentialism becomes almost meaningless. In particular, her juxtaposition of a scientific tone (genetic "code") with visionary language implies an openness to diverse discourses and acknowledges the complexity of the issues with which she is concerned. (Consider, in contrast, the paucity

of scientific tone in Oliver's work.) This blending of the scientific with the biological and historical is what lends so much authority to Hogan's themes of genocide and environmental reproductive anxiety.

The theme of interspecies connection is also found in "Mountain Lion." As an endangered species, the mountain lion "lives on the dangerous side" and "in the yellow-eyed shadow of a darker fear"—the fear of extinction. Mountain lion and poet meet "inside mortal dusk" and between them passes "the road / ghosts travel / when they cannot rest / in the land of the terrible other." Hogan draws an analogy between the mountain lion's fear of humans and her own fears of white domination:

I was the wild thing
 she had learned to fear.
 Her power lived
 in a dream of my leaving.
 It was the same way
 I have looked so many times at others
 in clear light
 before lowering my eyes
 and turning away
 from what lives inside those
 who have found
 two worlds cannot live

inside a single vision (B 27).³²

That the human and not the mountain lion is the wild thing implies the savagery of those who would exterminate another species. Hogan looks at whites, the hostile Other of the two worlds, in the same way the mountain lion looks at her. This parallel reverses racist stereotypes of "wild Indians" and implies that it is the whites who are wild and fearsome. and that their departure remains a dream. The final lines of the poem suggest that the underlying conflict is a singleness of vision. Hogan turns away from this single vision, and nothing passes between her and those who hold it. This is in contrast to the communication between herself and the mountain lion, and her own multiple, environmentally holistic vision.

The analogy between Native Americans and endangered animals is repeated in "The Fallen." In this poem, the speaker sees an asteroid fall and finds a pregnant wolf dead of starvation in a steel trap in an "eroded field." She contrasts the Native American and Euro-American views of the wolf as a symbol:

In our astronomy
the Great Wolf
lived in sky.

It was the mother of all women
and howled her daughter's names
into the winds of night.

³² Linda Hogan, "Mountain Lion," The Book of Medicines (Minneapolis: Coffee House, 1993) 27. Hereafter abbreviated B. I am grateful to Coffee House Press for supplying a copy of this book.

But the new people,
 whatever stepped inside their shadow,
 they would kill,

.

In their stories
 Wolf was the devil, falling
 down an empty
 shrinking universe,
 God's Lucifer
 with yellow eyes
 that had seen their failings
 and knew that they could kill the earth,
 that they would kill each other

The speaker tries to throw the demonic asteroid back into the sky but it comes "down . to ruined earth again. // Sky would not take back / what it had done." European astronomy, like the rest of the European worldview, is the dominant paradigm and even rules the sky which looks down on "the swollen belly / and dried up nipples of a hungry world."

Especially in the play on "failing" and "falling," there is an implied criticism of Christian cosmology, which associates the earth and the material world generally with evil, a separate realm from the heavens above from which Satan was cast down. Hogan's Native American critique of Christianity has obvious commonalities with the environmental

critique of Judeo-Christian traditions about the earth. Such associations lead to a disdain for this world, as is hinted when the speaker notes that Wolf was not valued "[i]n their science." Hogan's willingness to pursue a cultural critique further distinguishes her work from Oliver's; many of Oliver's animal poems become constrained by her adherence to traditional symbolism.

"The Fallen" concludes: "That night, / I saw the trapper's shadow / and it had four legs." As in "Mountain Lion," we have the implication that the true savage beasts are murderous humans, here the trapper who murdered the wolf. Seeing the trapper's shadow is also dangerously close to being inside it and being killed, which links the fate of the wolf to the fate of the speaker. Hogan's emphasis here on the visual properties of sight and shadow remind us of the dangerous "single vision" of "Mountain Lion." That the fallen wolf was pregnant when it died suggests the deaths of future generations and hints at the theme of genocide (B 42-43). In this respect, "The Fallen" might be compared to William Stafford's "Traveling Through the Dark," wherein he finds a dead but pregnant doe by the side of the road. "Traveling Through the Dark" also juxtaposes the pregnant carcass with images of Western expansion, especially its nearly demonic automobile pumping glaring red exhaust. Like Hogan, Stafford emphasizes the connections between the deaths of animals and of humans. He is concerned in "Traveling Through the Dark" to prevent the traffic accidents which "might make more dead" and deliberates "for us all." He also critiques Western philosophy through his description of thought itself as a type of accident-prone "swerving."

Hogan's repeated identifications with other species and beings is part of her environmentally holistic outlook. Environmental holism, like other holisms, holds that everything is connected to everything else and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In other words, the world is seen not in terms of linear hierarchy or demarcated categories, but as a vast interconnecting web. Environmental holism particularly stresses the unity and interconnectedness of humans and non-human nature (Merchant 76-77). In a 1981 essay, Hogan writes: "We need to expand our concepts of community and self to include the animal, the vegetable and the mineral" ("Transformation" 406).

This unity and interconnectedness is a basic precept of Native American philosophy and spirituality. According to Paula Gunn Allen, "The American Indian sees all creatures as relatives (and in tribal systems relationship is central), as offspring of the Great Mystery, as cocreators, as children of our mother, and as necessary parts of an ordered, balanced, and living whole":

In English, one can divide the universe into two parts: the natural and the supernatural. Humanity has no real part in either, being neither animal nor spirit-- that is, the supernatural is discussed as though it were apart from people, and the natural as though people were apart from it. This necessarily forces English-speaking people into a position of alienation from the world they live in. Such isolation is entirely foreign to American Indian thought. At base, every story, every song, every ceremony tells the Indian that each creature is part of a living whole and that all parts of that

whole are related to one another by virtue of their participation in the whole of being (SH 59-60).³³

Allen identifies the differences between these philosophies with differences in language, insinuating that the differences are encoded in language in a determining rather than in a reflective fashion. What is interesting about Hogan's poetry is that she continually underlines such differences while writing in English. Unlike Gary Snyder, her poetry is not laced with foreign phrases associated with various "native" traditions. On one level, this lack of non-English references could suggest that Hogan feels no particular need to provide *bona fides* of Native American authenticity. However, in her poem "The Truth Is," Hogan explicitly confronts her mixed racial heritage and the question "about who loved who / and who killed who." Nor does she opt for the easy logic of universal relation to solve racial difference, insisting that although she'd "like to say" that she is like a grafted fruit tree bearing different fruits: "It's not that way. The truth is / we are crowded together / and knock against each other at night."³⁴ Even in its dark confusion of crowding and knocking, this view of racial conflict both internal and external avoids the kind of single vision condemned in "Mountain Lion" and promoted by such groups as the English-Only Movement. In keeping with her genocidal theme, Hogan's exclusive use of English suggests the paucity of speakers of Native American

³³ For a fuller discussion of holism as a central precept of Native American spirituality, see Allen's introduction to Studies in American Indian Literature.

³⁴ Linda Hogan, Seeing Through the Sun (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1985) 4. Hereafter abbreviated STS.

languages. It is most likely, however, that Hogan's exclusive use of English is a gesture towards making her work accessible to a wider audience.

The goal of accessibility is in keeping with the didactic tone of some of Hogan's poems. Environmental holism is for Hogan a spiritual value requiring action in the world in order to save the world. In "Waking Up the Rake," she approvingly quotes a traditional healer who told her, "Our work is our altar" (347). One of the heroes of Hogan's novel Mean Spirit is Michael Horse, a medicine man who writes The Book of Horse, his own book of corrections to the Bible. His gospel reads:

Honor father sky and mother earth. Look after everything. Life resides in all things, even the motionless stones. Take care of the insects for they have their place, and the plants and the trees for they feed the people. Everything on earth, every creature and plant wants to live without pain, so do them no harm. Treat all people in creation with respect: all is sacred, especially the bats.

Live gently with the land. We are one with the land. We are part of everything in our world, part of the roundness and cycles of life. The world does not belong to us. We belong to the world. And all life is sacred (357).

This gospel is presented in the novel as being written for the benefit of white people, since the Native Americans have always known its wisdom.

Hogan also proselytizes from this perspective in her poetry. In "To Light," she states that water and trees contain and help to circulate the stories of her people's oppression, stories that are transmitted from the bodies of the dead back to the earth:

They have journeyed through the graveyards
of our loved ones,
turning in their graves
to carry the stories of life to air (STS 35).

This poem emphasizes the communication between humans and nature. Its notion of information transmitted from the dead is particularly compelling, and is reminiscent of Gary Snyder's poetic definitions of biomass, or information stored in the world's biological matrix. Like Oliver's insistence on portraying death as redeemed by life-giving maternal forces, Hogan insists on redeeming death through survival in history, "the stories of life." The faith that the truth of history will "come to light" and the image of ancestors turning in their graves indicate her outrage over the historical treatment of Native Americans in the United States. This is a good example of the conflation of environmental sentiment and moral protest.

The recycling image of connection to nature through the dead is repeated in "The Direction of Light":

Children grow inch by inch
like trees in a graveyard,
victors over the same gravity
that pulls us down (B 79).

The implication is that children, the future generation, are nurtured by their ancestors as much as the trees are fed by the decomposing bodies in the graves. At the end of the poem, Hogan makes her metaphor explicit: "Did I call this poem / the direction of light? / I meant *life*" (B 80).

Hogan's poetry emphasizes the physicality of the connections between human and nature. Unlike Oliver, who uses animal characters in her poems of life and death, Hogan often focuses on the physical participation of the human body in these cycles. In so doing, she reinforces the human and nonhuman interconnections of environmental holism. In "Skin Dreaming," Hogan says human skin "is water":

It has fallen through ancestral hands.

It is the bearer of vanished forest

fallen through teeth and jaws

of earth

where we were once other

visions and creations (B 70).

The "teeth and jaws / of earth" is another reference to the decomposing action of the grave, and again the ancestral dead are linked to environmental degradation through the "vanished forest."

This archaeological view of the human body continues in "Great Measures," where in the middle of a poem about sex and reproduction Hogan writes:

I am still this measure of brine,

ancient carbon, the pull of iron

across linked and desperate distances.

beginning and end together

the way sunlight on skin

is still connected

to the fiery storms of its origins.

The human/nature connections given universal scope here continue in the rest of the poem, where she is candling eggs to see which are fertile. The bloodspots within the fertilized "oval light" of the eggs parallel the sunspots alluded to above. The "pull of iron" is picked up in the evolutionary history of the chickens, which were once "wilder birds" who followed "the magnetic longings / of stars" (B 81). The plural of the title indicates that individual fertility is as great as the sweep of the universe. The shifting scale of focus from the minute perceptions of the individual body to the vast sweep of cosmic forces is a typical literary strategy of writers preaching holistic ethics, and has been linked with the fractal scales of recent work in physics.³⁵

The juxtaposition in these poems of death and reproduction--both sexual reproduction and the reproduction and transmittal of history--is a hallmark of the reproductive anxiety I find in Hogan's work. This anxiety becomes particularly acute in poems treating human fertility. Patrick Murphy has urged the writing of environmental literature featuring a dialogue between human and nature, and insists that this dialogue

³⁵ Allen and others have noted a resemblance between quantum physics and the holistic worldview of Native American thought (SH 60). This is a complex topic, and I have no intention of attempting a doomed explanation of quantum physics in a literature dissertation.

should take place even "at the most basic levels of energy/information exchange, as in gene pools and cross-fertilization" (Literature 35). He names Hogan as a practitioner of such dialogue (Literature 12).

Fertility and chromosomal integrity are difficult issues. There is a general societal uneasiness about new reproductive technologies which allow genetic manipulation to an extent undreamed of even a decade ago, and about environmentalist warnings of the dire effects of overpopulation. In addition to these, Native American populations have further anxiety given their specific history of both unwanted surgical sterilization and reproductive difficulties and birth defects due to radiation poisoning. And yet, given the historical genocide of Native Americans and the importance of tribal continuance and relation in Native American thought, having children is vital if their cultures are to continue. Charles England explains:

The values that American Indians have toward the number of children a woman bears are quite different than that of white America. There are many Indians who feel that population control should not apply to them. They believe the federal government has done enough to limit the number of Indians on this continent, and the idea of limiting the number of children is based on what whites feel is a comfortable amount.

Hogan addresses the issue of radiation and compromised fertility in "The Other Side." In this poem, she describes a radiation-tainted world, where women are

breaking eggs in faith
that new ones will grow

radiant in feather cribs

the coyotes watch over.

Obviously, eggs watched by coyotes will be devoured. The landscape is also degraded: there is a tree with a broken arm and the cows are "wearing a death mask." Perhaps the faith of the women is not entirely misplaced, however, since Hogan does offer some hope in this poem. For one, while coyotes are egg-eating scavengers, Coyote in Native American mythologies is the consummate trickster-survivor, adept at turning adverse conditions to his benefit. At the end of the poem, a

. . . broken branch is innocent

of its own death

as it goes on breathing

what's in the air these days,

radiating soft new leaves,

telling a story about the other side of creation.

The puns on radiant and radiation suggest that the eggs and leaves are indeed poisoned by radiation, and the other side of creation is destruction, but both the leaves and eggs are still symbols of new life. Running through the poem is a mystical white horse which seems to be a symbol of redemption. Although it has "disappeared / over the edge of the earth," the speaker listens for its return "from the open mouth of the underworld, / kicking in its teeth" (STS 27).

Hogan is less ambivalent and much angrier in "The Alchemists," where she condemns the science that produces radiation as the misguided quest of fools:

And the mad soul of mercury
 fell through their hands
 through settled floors
 and came to rest
 silver and deadly
 in a hidden corner
 where it would grow.

The poem shifts its setting to a hospital, and we see the human costs of this science when we hear "a doctor / tell a man where the knife / would cut flesh." The speaker's father, who is perhaps also a patient, suggests that the doctor's words are magical, a healing art like poetry or storytelling. The speaker corrects her father and insists that the doctor's methods are part and parcel of the same science that brought the cancer-causing mercury. The doctor is another alchemist: "only a man / talking to iron, / willing it to be gold" (B 55-56). In some respects the correction of the father may be read as the rebuke of a younger generation paying for the mistake of its elders. In another sense, however, it is also a female rebuke to men based on women's special connection to fertility and reproduction due to women's ability to bear children. "The Alchemists" can be read alongside Adrienne Rich's 1974 poem "Power," which also compares medical and nuclear science. Rich laments the blindness of Marie Curie--both her literal blindness from radiation poisoning and the emotional blindness that let her die "denying her wounds." Hogan is determined to speak over the denial that allows physical and cultural destruction to go unchecked, but her anger causes "The Alchemists" to succumb to the

same singleness of vision she deplores elsewhere. Unlike Rich, Hogan does not allow ambivalence about progress and danger to enter her poem. In "The Alchemists," she instead falls back upon a simplistic vision of women's special role as givers and guardians of life.

In most of Hogan's poetry, this special role of women is more complexly holistic and encompasses both maternal deities and individual human and animal mothers. Native American maternal deities differ considerably from the Western earth mothers we saw in Oliver's work. Because there is no division in Native American cosmologies between the spiritual and the material, there is a sense in which the earth goddess is not a goddess at all, but is the earth itself, which is both actual and sacred. Ward Churchill explains that the earth is *the* mother, and not the Earth Mother or Mother Earth (202). Archetypal critic Annis Pratt also cautions against interpreting Native American archetypes through Western Jungian paradigms (315).

The role of Native American maternal deities is not confined to biological reproduction. Instead these deities--variously known as Earth Woman, Old Spider Woman, Spider Grandmother, Thought Woman, and others--govern all types of creation and even the destruction necessary for new creations. In many instances, these deities bring forth life not biologically but through chanting and singing, methods which make their appearances especially resonant in poetry. Allen emphasizes that the maternal role is in this sense one of great ritual power, not of mute biological fecundity (SH 14-15, 27-28). It is also important to note that this ritual female power is not akin to Dianic branches of ecofeminism which type females as life-giving and males as death-dealing.

Instead, the ritual aspects of Native American maternal deities are part of a complete system of rituals including complementary male-oriented rituals. (SH 82).

Bearing all of this in mind, we can still see biological reproductive anxiety in Hogan's poems about mothers, an anxiety made more intense by the historical genocide of Native Americans. We have already seen one example in "The Fallen," where the death of the pregnant wolf is connected to the destruction of the environment. Another example is "Milk," in which she compares the sight of cows hooked up to milking machines with her own memories of the smell of her mother's breast milk. The stanza that follows this comparison gives a harrowing picture of the fate of cows and, by implication, of people:

They were hungry,
with angled bones
poking through the darkness
where they stood,
ate, weakened,
coupled and gave birth afraid
their kind would not go on,
and the milk sellers
hoisting up the dying
thirsty cow
too weak to stand
in leather straps and milking death,

drinking its watery milk,
 eating land,
 they were hungry.

This image of a bovine Middle Passage is ambiguous. The reference to "eating land" suggests the damage caused by western expansion, but is also related to the familiar idea of the famished eating dirt, suggesting the desperation of many immigrants to America. The transport and exploitation of the cows suggest the horrors of slavery. The hunger of the last line above is universal in describing both the milkers and the multivalent cows. It is significant that the cows are female, for this picture of misery is redeemed at the end of the poem by the image of women washing cloth in the river, "cloth / blue as the flowing light of milk." The cloth could have been swept down the river "except for the hands that held it." It is the holding action of these women's hands that sustains life: "Something must hold me this way, / and you, / and the thin blue tail of the galaxy, . to keep us from leaving" (B 50-51). The image of a galactic web of life reinforces the universal symbolism of the cows' misery. While milk is an obvious symbol of life-giving maternity, so is cloth since it must be woven and can represent the cosmic web of life, here held together and in place by women despite the misery elsewhere in the poem. The references in this poem to both maternal milk and the female activity of weaving are suggestive of the creatrix deities discussed above. The suggestion of various and partially shared sufferings is another example of Hogan's multiple vision.

Typical of Hogan's poems of maternal power is a holistic incorporation of fractal scale; she shifts between contemplations of personal fertility and relations to

considerations of tribal and universal kinship and history. Such shifts are especially significant for a people which has suffered a history of genocide. Her many mother/daughter/grandmother poems emphasize both personal feelings and generational continuity. Annis Pratt notes that Hogan's poems celebrate "an interbraiding of generations" (330). Pratt finds Hogan exemplary of Native American women poets who celebrate grandmothers and other tribal elders both as "goddess-creators" (333) and in resistance to the rupturing of tribal culture by white values (329).

The sacralization of intergenerational female relationships in Hogan's poetry may seem idealized and even romanticized to readers accustomed to the dysfunctional tales of confessional poetry and Freudian family analysis. Critic Patricia Clark Smith finds a refusal to psychologize intergenerational female conflict typical of Native American women's poetry. Instead of depicting such conflict in psychological terms, Smith finds that Native American women poets depict it "as a matter of cultural alienation" (114). For Native American women, "[l]anguage, custom, and geographical environment, rather than psychological barriers, effect the separation between the generations" (115). This emphasis highlights the quotidian interpersonal effects of the loss of native languages and customs as a result of cultural if not physical genocide. Hogan's attitudes about Native American intergenerational female relationships coincide with Smith's. In her essay "The Feathers," Hogan describes the spiritual significance of her granddaughter's umbilical cord as "the sustaining link between her and her mother, her origins" (65). The mysterious loss of the cord from her household and its subsequent miraculous recovery

associate the preservation of such links with the continuation of the larger world both mystical and physical.

Seeing Through the Sun features an entire sequence of poems entitled "Daughters Sleeping."³⁶ In "Desert," the barren landscape is rejuvenated as the speaker transmits cultural knowledge to her daughters. She teaches them to plant and "They plant so carefully / seeds grow from their hands." She teaches them not to disturb the spiders while they plant, and in the next stanza she teaches them to weave. This is a reference to Spider Grandmother, the weaver of the web of life. The weaving of the daughters combines the human with the natural world. Their lace contains "the white spines of a cactus, / backbone, / a lace containing the heat of sun / and night's bare moon." In this sense, the daughters are taught by their mother to weave the world into existence. They learn "that we are women, / a hundred miles of green / wills itself out of our skin" (STS 44). The transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next has transformed and revived the land from a barren desert to a green place where seeds may be planted and grown.

"Morning: The World in the Lake" begins with a description of ducks and their reflections in the pond: "Beneath each black duck / another swims, / shadow / joined to blood and flesh." The description of these otherworld reflections continues as the ducks

³⁶ Coltelli's biographical sketch of Hogan states that Hogan's daughters are adopted. This is not noted in Hogan's poetry about her daughters, and I'm not sure it matters. In one sense, it does, since I make much here of physical fertility and reproduction. In another sense, it doesn't, since Hogan's poetry obviously need not be autobiographical. In terms of privileging the continuation of cultural customs and history, and showing the maternal role as that of a mentor more than a breeder, the issue of adoption makes no difference.

are joined by a blackbird and by the speaker's daughter. When the blackbird flies off, its red underwing is reflected like fire in the water. The speaker realizes "we are . . . daughters"

who would sleep as if reflected
 alongside our mothers,
 the mothers of angels and shadows,
 the helix and spiral of centuries
 twisting inside.
 The radiant ones are burning
 beneath this world.
 They rise up
 the quenching water.

The fire, the flash of red that survives "the quenching water," is the spirit of the women's ancestors, the mothers whose genetic "helix and spiral" continues to twist inside the living women. In Native American religions, spirits are as close as reflections in water and are shadows "joined to blood and flesh." There are many fire images in this poem: the sun on the horizon is a "crescent of fire" reflected in the eyes of the bird, the sun "burns," the leap of a fish is "fiery" (STS 56). These fire images linked to the images of birds suggest a phoenix-like rebirth of the ancestors through the body of the daughter.

The interconnection of generations and the survival of the race despite a history of genocide is the theme of "Tear." This poem describes the forced removal of the Chickasaws to Oklahoma. The title refers to women's "tear dresses," dresses made from

torn cloth because they were not allowed scissors or knives which could be used as weapons against the soldiers herding them north. There is also the obvious pun on the weeping of the women along the "trail of tears." The speaker claims a genetic memory of this journey, even though she was not yet born and was "only a restlessness inside a woman's body" (B 59). Because she remembers them, her ancestors continue to walk with her:

They walk inside me. This blood
is a map of the road between us.
I am why they survived.
The world behind them did not close.
The world before them is still open.
All around me are my ancestors,
my unborn children.
I am the tear between them
and both sides live (B 60).

Here we can see that it is the remembrance and honoring of ancestors which makes possible subsequent generations. The ancestors' survival for the speaker's sake entails her survival for the sake of her unborn children. Hogan's use of map imagery helps to extend her sense of ancestral relatedness from the temporal plane to the spatial plane. In this sense "Tear" resonates geographically and raises the role of the environment in human history.

Racial survival despite displacement is an important idea for Hogan, and is featured in the final lines of Mean Spirit. At the end of the novel, the Graycloud family has been driven from their home. Many of their family members have been murdered by the evil oil companies which are the villains of this environmental novel. The Grayclouds flee the town while their house burns behind them. The last lines of the novel are:

No one spoke. But they were alive. They carried generations along with them, into the prairie and through it, to places where no road had been cut before them. They traveled past houses that were like caves of light in the black world. The night was on fire with their pasts and they were alive (371).

Likewise, the plot of Hogan's second novel, Solar Storms, revolves around an alienated young woman's return to the Native American community of her grandparents and her gradual discovery of her own spiritual and bodily ethnic heritage.³⁷

In many ways, generational continuity and the transmission of cultural knowledge are Hogan's methodology as well as her artistic motivation. Her writing is an effort to counteract the effects of physical and cultural genocide, and an attempt to reproduce for future generations Native American culture and the environment with which it is entwined. Critic Joseph Bruchac finds survival to be a major theme in contemporary

³⁷ Much else in Solar Storm relates to the themes of genocide and environmentalism, but as it appeared late in the process of this dissertation and is a novel rather than poetry, I am not discussing it in full. Interested parties should certainly seek it out.

Native American literature and he includes in this theme "survival of the old ways. survival of Indian nations, personal survival, and, in the long run, the survival of the whole biosphere" (199). He cites Hogan as one of "the most important, powerful poets" writing on this survival theme (205).

"Writing to survive" is usually taken to be an artistic conceit, the melodramatic phrase of some overwrought beret-wearing extrovert sharing his inner turmoil with everyone else in the café. In much Native American and environmental literary practice, and certainly for Linda Hogan, the phrase has more literal meanings. Given the integration of the material and spiritual planes in Native American thought, Hogan's work needs to be read as ritual. N. Scott Momaday emphasizes Native American literature's sources in oral traditions, and specifically describes Hogan's poetry as "the true reflection of oral tradition" (14). Central to this oral tradition, according to Momaday, "is a deep and unconditional belief in the efficacy of language. Words are intrinsically powerful. They are magical. By means of words can one bring about physical changes in the universe" (7).

Hogan shares these views of language, and by extension poetry, as religious. In an article on Momaday, she describes poetry as "a form of divine utterance that moves us to action, that is action itself" ("Who" 176). She believes that language has a healing power: "As energy, language contains the potential to restore us to a unity with earth and the rest of the universe" ("Who" 177). Her heroic gospel writer Michael Horse writes "for those who would come later, for the next generations and the next, as if the act of writing was itself part of divination and prophecy, an act of deliverance" (Mean 337).

This description of writing is attuned with Native American literary practice generally, in which one model for writers is the creatrix Grandmother Spider or Thought Woman, partly because she is a transmitter of culture and a protector of her people (Scarberry 100-101).

These are old, even archaic, notions of language. They are also, however, popular notions in environmental writing and environmental literary criticism. Part of the impetus for the popular environmental embrace of Native American literature and other indigenous writings is that such native texts are presumed, wrongly, to be models of direct and honest writing that derive their simple eloquence from their closeness to the land and lack of pretension, a refreshing multicultural break from white men speaking with forked tongues.³⁸ The prevalent stereotype of the "ecological Indian" contributes to such attitudes in its associations of Native Americans with primitive, natural, and therefore "true" languages.

The usual environmental argument against postmodernism is that vulgar deconstruction and other postmodernisms deny commonsense reality and in so doing contribute to our alienation from the earth and our subsequent disregard for our environment.³⁹ One problem with this argument is that it stereotypes postmodernism, which does not, in fact, deny all reality. Deconstructionists have tremendous respect for

³⁸ I am obviously exaggerating, and there are many fine environmental critics who do treat Native American works with the complexity they warrant, such as Patrick Murphy.

³⁹ A sampling of these arguments may be found in the anthology Reinventing Nature?: Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction edited by Soulé and Lease.

the power of words and the realities they create; no one bothers to deconstruct powerless meaningless texts. The dismantling of oppressive power structures in texts which are assumed to affect readers is one of the liberatory aspects of deconstruction. The other problem with the plea for commonsense is that what is offered as commonsense isn't. Hogan is not writing a transparent language wherein the signifier is equal to the signified and the sign is whole, complete, and obvious. She is writing a mystical language with allusions to spiritual practices and with the goal of creating a ritual object. If postmodernist texts are felt to be thinned away from any reference to the real world, texts like Hogan's are thickened with references to all the worlds at once.

In a recent conference paper,⁴⁰ Pamela Collins argues that the metaphors of Native American literature differ epistemologically from Western metaphors. Collins suggests that Native American metaphoricity is "fractal-like," rooted in "an understanding of the deep and dynamic connections which already exist in the All-That-Is, despite and including the articulations of humankind." Collins cites as evidence "the Pueblo concept of individual words being connected to entire stories" and concludes that for Native American writers metaphoricity can serve as "a touch upon already existing connections rather than [as] an idiosyncratic, momentary strategy to convey an idea" (5). Collins believes that these "deeper" connected metaphors account for the disjunction of Native American literature and alienated postmodernism. I would argue instead that Pueblo metaphoricity as described above is akin to the complex connectivity of postmodern

⁴⁰ Presented at Sharp Eyes II: Multicultural Perspectives on Environmental Writing. SUNY/Oneonta, 22 June 1996.

hypertextuality. Perhaps much of the hostility between the fields of Native American studies and postmodernist studies stems from monolithic and indeed essentialized perceptions on both sides of the debate. Such misperceptions trouble environmental literary studies in general and will need to be resolved if the field is to influence literary study as a whole. One useful stance for environmental literary critics to adopt is an adherence to the multiplicity of vision urged in Linda Hogan's work.

Linda Hogan's poetry, like the rituals it evokes, is highly purposeful. She writes to maintain her cultural traditions, to keep alive the memory of her slaughtered ancestors, and to create a better future through the promotion of a more holistic and environmental worldview. In this, her poetry is akin to all environmental writing, which like other political and religious writings assumes it will influence its readers and move them to action in the world. Critical approaches which do not credit these motivations will make little of Hogan's work.

Paula Gunn Allen sees special difficulties in finding an audience for Native American poetry: "What we bear witness to is not easily admissible into the consciousness of other Americans . . ." (SH 157). The history of Native Americans in the United States is indeed disheartening reading, and may well account for the marginalization of Native American writing due to a sort of literary "compassion fatigue." What is especially disheartening is that this marginalization occurs at a time when Native American themes are saturating popular culture. Day-glo dream catchers are sold at every mall, fringe is in, and successful movies like Dances with Wolves and The Last of the Mohicans are inspiring further "Indian"-themed films.

From a historical perspective, however, "Indian" themes have always saturated American culture. Annette Kolodny remarks that since the late sixteenth century Native American women have been "a kind of emblem" for the land: "The excitement that greeted John Rolfe's marriage to Pocahontas, in April of 1614, may have been due to the fact that it served, in some symbolic sense, as a kind of objective correlative for the possibility of Europeans' actually possessing the charms inherent in the virgin continent" (Lay 5). The commercial rituals surrounding the release earlier this year of Disney's animated film Pocahontas showed that the emblematic link between Native American women and the land still functions, albeit colored with a corporate environmentalist message. It is to be hoped that amidst all this media marketing the more thoughtful voice of Linda Hogan will gain a larger audience.

Chapter Four: Gary Snyder: Preserving the Family Tree

Gary Snyder is almost more famous as an environmentalist than as a poet. His poetry is in this regard inseparable from the environmental politics and theories that inform it. It may be that this environmental content accounts for much of his popularity. One teacher of a seminar in environmentalism complained to me that her students were bored by ecology textbooks: "All they want to read is Gary Snyder." While there is no question that Snyder's work is considered environmental, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the reproductive anxiety which arises out of his environmentalism. This chapter examines that reproductive anxiety as a theme in his work and as it relates to surrounding critical issues.

One of Gary Snyder's most deservedly famous poems is "Axe Handles," from the 1983 collection of the same name. In the poem, Snyder teaches his son how to make a hatchet handle, and this paternal scene becomes a meditation on the transmission of knowledge, technologies, and culture throughout history:

There I begin to shape the old handle

With the hatchet, and the phrase

First learned from Ezra Pound

Rings in my ears!

"When making an axe handle

the pattern is not far off."

And I say this to Kai

"Look: We'll shape the handle

By checking the handle
 Of the axe we cut with--"
 And he sees. And I hear it again:
 It's in Lu Ji's *Wên Fu*, fourth century
 A.D. "Essay on Literature"-- in the
 Preface: "In making the handle
 Of an axe
 By cutting wood with an axe
 The model is indeed near at hand."
 My teacher Shih-hsiang Chen
 Translated that and taught it years ago
 And I see: Pound was an axe,
 Chen was an axe, I am an axe
 And my son a handle, soon
 To be shaping again, model
 And tool, craft of culture,
 How we go on.⁴¹

"Axe Handles" encapsulates the reproductive concerns I find in Snyder's poetry.
 What strikes me in reading it is the imbalance between past and future scales. If Snyder
 himself is the pivot of a scale, sagging behind him in the past is the vast weight of

⁴¹ Gary Snyder, "Axe Handles," Axe Handles: Poems (San Francisco: North Point, 1983) 5-6. Hereafter abbreviated AH.

centuries of knowledge, continents of literature, and histories of technology. And feather-light on the future side of the scale there is only Kai--one little boy who wanted a hatchet. To a certain extent, this imbalance is no more than the truism that faces each new generation inheriting a complicated world. This chapter will show, however, that the stresses and strains in Snyder's poems about his own family consistently exploit this imbalance between a heavy history and an uncertain future. The placement of the heavy burden of history and civilization, *in toto*, on the shoulders of his sons is the sign of reproductive anxiety in Snyder's work. Snyder's children, at least in his poems, are not merely responsible for carrying on the family name, but for carrying on the human species and world culture. In this respect, Snyder's poems about his sons complement Linda Hogan's poems about her daughters.

Most notable about "Axe Handles" is its continual shifting of historical scale. The first line of the poem tells us that Kai asked for a hatchet "[o]ne afternoon the last week in April," the specific tone of which is misleading since we are not told in which April. We do of course realize it is spring, the archetypal season of rebirth. The reference to Ezra Pound points us to the Modernist era and the man who wrote ABC of Reading. Modeling Pound's didacticism, Snyder shows the lesson to Kai: "And he sees." Snyder further remembers the work of Lu Ji in the fourth century A.D., significantly found in a "preface" to the work of those who followed. Finally, Snyder remembers his own teacher from his "years ago" youth. This splitting and chopping of time sequence is symbolized in the splitting and chopping actions of the axe.

Except when recounting a past act of learning, however, the poem is entirely in the present tense: even the future is indicated by an infinitive rather than a future construction--"to be," not "will." This emphasis on the present moment enacts the very Zen lesson Snyder is reciting, yet ironically we find this emphasis on the present in a poem about the interaction of the past and the future. The juxtaposition we find in this poem of personal reminiscence and vast historical scope is typical of Snyder's generational poems.⁴²

The metaphor of the axe is also significant. Anyone familiar with Snyder's work recognizes woodcutting as one of his key poeticized activities, since it can variously symbolize both the industrial logging that destroys forest environments and the woodsman's craft and lore that Snyder finds necessary to an environmentally-attuned lifestyle. Here, the axe is benignly low-tech. In the beginning of the poem, Kai has a hatchet head with no handle, and his father bestows the handle while transmitting cultural knowledge in what can be read as a coming-of-age rite. Snyder uses the aural

⁴² These enormous shifts in relative scale are almost fractal, and are typical of the motions of "deep order" as described in chaos theory. Chaos theory, although a branch of physics, tends eventually to approach the spiritual, which is compatible with Snyder's scientific and spiritual theories of ecology. A full treatment of Snyder's resonance with chaos theory awaits a dissertator with better math skills than mine. I would like to note, however, that popularized versions of chaos theory have been linked with reproductive issues in other cultural contexts. For example, it is through the magic of chaos theory that the genetically-engineered infertility of the dinosaurs in Steven Spielberg's Jurassic Park (based on the best-selling novel by Michael Crichton) are able after all to breed and wreak more havoc on their hapless designers. Moving from mass media to more marginal productions, the punk rock band Nisi Period invoked chaos theory to bewail physical and spiritual impotence in their song, "Entropy Happens." For an overview of chaos theory as it affects literary theory, see the collection of essays edited by N. Katherine Hayles.

cliché of the sound of chopping axes "ringing in one's ears" to indicate his memories of his own lessons. Finally he declares that Pound, Chen, and himself are axes, and his son Kai is a handle who will become an axe capable of "shaping." The phallic image of the axe handle contributes to this thematics of paternal and cultural reproduction. The axe handle also serves as a metaphor for poetry as a tool of cultural transmission.

At the same time, "Axe Handles" is also a literal description of how to make a hatchet handle. Drawing on Margaret Homans's notion of "literalization," critic Jean Wyatt associates metaphors that "adhere to a baseline of literal meaning" with maternity (475). Wyatt suggests that "[w]hen the maternal body becomes the locus of discourse, the metaphorical becomes the actual . . ." (478). I would suggest that this powerful literality is effective in paternal as well as maternal discourses. Snyder exploits the power of literalized metaphors in many of his poems about his children. Literal metaphors regarding sexual intercourse and birth certainly appear in his work, but he literalizes paternity as well. His genetic and paternal relationship with his sons contextualizes the didacticism of many of his poems. These literal metaphors are also reminiscent of the environmental meta-indices that Coletta finds typical of environmental poetry, particularly Mary Oliver's.

Another noteworthy aspect of "Axe Handles" is its focus on generational transmission, in terms of both paternity and poetry. At the same time that Snyder is teaching his son, he is learning from his own teachers; there is a parallel between "And he sees" and "And I see." In fact, like all the best pedagogists, Snyder has learned from his own teaching. James McClintock has noted that Snyder's work draws heavily on the

ecological concept of succession, which refers to the changing and development of an ecosystem: "Snyder applies the concept and language of succession to environmental history and social change" (118). Snyder's use of this concept is consistent with his vision of humans as part of an ecosystem in which all parts constantly interact. This focus on intergenerational transmission seems to me to be an environmental and postmodernist revision of the Romantic search for origins, a revision which allows for a more fluid and more hopeful construction of historical narrative.⁴³ The splitting and chopping of time sequences is not despairing modernist fragmentation but positive postmodernist reconstruction. When asked about poetry as a method of instruction, Snyder specifically cited "Axe Handles" and said, "I see instruction as a continuance, as biological almost. And instruction is a cultural metaphor, or a cultural analogue of other ways of modeling and remodeling" (qtd. in Nordstrom 138). While Snyder has a great deal of reproductive anxiety as revealed in the emphasis he places on his own paternity and on the possible futures facing his children, he also hopes for a better world for his children and this hope makes his poetry both more personal and more appealing than that of many other environmental writers.

Such a statement is a long way from Snyder's own literary origins in the Beat movement, noted for its sexual outlawry, nuclear fears, and vision of the best minds of its generation destroyed by madness. The current vogue for Beat literature may reflect a renewal of these cultural anxieties. It may also be part of the ongoing revision of notions

⁴³ John Elder sees a fascination with origins in Snyder and other environmental poets as a Romantic influence (*Imagining* 36).

of manhood and gender generally in American culture. The various emphases on paternity in Snyder's poetry resonate with recent anti-patriarchal explorations of masculinity. Although Snyder's work has long diverged from any kind of pure Beat aesthetic, it is interesting that cultural criticism of the Beats has emphasized reproductive and environmental issues. In 1971, Bruce Cook called Snyder the Beat Thoreau, and reported that Snyder's personal library contained a copy of one of Dr. Spock's childcare handbooks (28-31). More recently, poet Michael McClure declared the Beats "the literary arm of the ecological movement."⁴⁴ In an early (1960) article, Snyder himself suggested that the Beats aimed to discover "what marriage really means."⁴⁵

Sherman Paul considers Snyder a key figure in the Beat discourse of masculinity. Paul cites both Jack Kerouac's The Dharma Bums and Snyder's translations of T'ang dynasty poet Han-Shan in Cold Mountain Poems as didactic texts of manhood for the Beat generation (Search 188). Kerouac's The Dharma Bums is the Beat text most often associated with Snyder due to its fictional portrait of Snyder in the character of Japhy Ryder. Snyder has denied that the portrait is biographically very truthful (qtd. in Paul, Search 301). Despite Snyder's denials, there is a slightly parodic ring of truth to Ryder's vision of his future: "Ray, by God, later on in our future life we can have a fine

⁴⁴ McClure made this statement during a panel discussion at the 1994 NYU Beat Conference. I am indebted to Levi Asher for supplying this material, and highly recommend his webpage, Literary Kicks, devoted to things Beat. (URL: <http://www.charm.net/~brooklyn/LitKicks.html>)

⁴⁵ Gary Snyder, "'Notes on the Beat Generation' and 'The New Wind,'" A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1995) 11. Hereafter abbreviated PS.

free-wheeling tribe in these California hills, get girls and have dozens of radiant enlightened brats, live like Indians in hogans and eat berries and buds" (Kerouac 201).

Barbara Ehrenreich also perceives the Beats as a challenge to traditional masculinity in her chapter on the Beats in The Hearts of Men, a book on contemporary American images of manhood. She agrees that the Beats presented an image of male rebellion against the 1950s emphasis on "the interlocking demands of job and marriage" (55-57). Ehrenreich examines 1950s Playboy magazine satires which reacted to the Beat challenge by portraying "Beatniks" as passive sexual partners who lack "normal male reactions" (61-62). Even so, the perceived message of Beat rebellion is in keeping with my focus on environmental reproductive anxiety. In a 1959 article for Life magazine, Paul O'Neil derided the Beat perspective on "the square." O'Neil satirized a stereotypical Beat derision of the conventional American male:

a tragic sap who spends all the juices and energies of life in stultifying submission to the "rat race" and does so, furthermore, with no more reward than sexual enslavement by a matriarchy of stern and grasping wives and the certainty of atomic death for his children (qtd. in Ehrenreich 64).

Curiously, the anti-Beat tone of this late 1950s article seems to be reappearing in current journalism, perhaps in a backlash against the current Beat renaissance, and perhaps also in reaction to the current conservative tone of the country. The New York Times recently ran an article accusing the Beats of bad parenting. Daniel Pinchbeck interviews several grown children of people associated with the Beats and concludes they

all suffer from dysfunctional families. (Tara Marlowe, daughter of Diane DiPrima, calls the Beat poets "icky guys with foam at the side of their mouths.")⁴⁶ Writing in the Boston Globe, Daniel Golden holds the Beats accountable for other peoples' children when he blames the influence of Jack Kerouac for the 1994 heroin overdose death of a 17-year-old boy in Amherst, Massachusetts.

The atomic fear of the Beats is certainly continued in Snyder's environmental work. Bomb-related anxiety is present in "Vapor Trails"⁴⁷ and "A Volcano in Kyushu" (BC 43). The Japanese settings of these poems evoke associations with Hiroshima which increase their tone of anxiety. "LMFBR" is about the "Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor," personified as "Death himself" with a "Plutonium tooth-glow." "LMFBR" concludes by invoking the apocalyptic dark goddess Kali and the "end of days."⁴⁸ Several more nuclear anxiety poems are included in Left Out in the Rain. "Bomb Test" contemplates the passage of uranium through the food chain.⁴⁹ "The Arts Council Meets

⁴⁶ Gary Snyder's grown children are not interviewed in this article. However, one of the interviewees is Caleb Carr, whose father, Lucien Carr, introduced Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg to William S. Burroughs. Caleb Carr is also the author of the recent bestseller The Alienist, a novel about a turn-of-the-century serial killer which examines criminal psychology in light of poor parent-child relationships.

⁴⁷ Gary Snyder, "Vapor Trails," The Back Country (NY: New Directions, 1968) 37. Hereafter abbreviated BC.

⁴⁸ Gary Snyder, "LMFBR," Turtle Island (NY: New Directions, 1974) 67. Hereafter abbreviated TI.

⁴⁹ Gary Snyder, "Bomb Test," Left Out in the Rain: New Poems 1947-1985 (San Francisco: North Point, 1986) 63. Hereafter abbreviated LO.

in Eureka" worries over the environmental and corporate presence of a nuclear power plant (LO 131). "We Make Our Vows Together with All Beings" shares with a doe fear of a "Bomber" (LO 147). Left Out in the Rain is a 1986 collection of previously unpublished poems spanning Snyder's entire career, and it is arguable that his inclusion therein of poems about nuclear anxiety indicates that the subject is one of ongoing concern. John Elder cites Snyder along with Jonathan Schell, the author of The Fate of the Earth, as the writers "most helpful in pointing a path away" from nuclear war ("Seeing" 223).

Many of Snyder's nuclear and environmental extinction poems specifically treat the risk to the human race and especially to children. "The Call of the Wild" links the Vietnam War with "A war against earth": "So they bomb and they bomb / Day after day, across the planet." As various species are killed off, children's lives, and by extension everyone's, will be impoverished; the cries of coyotes will vanish and "My sons will lose this / Music they have just started / To love" (TI 21-23). "Two Comments" bleakly states "your little children will all be destroyed" (LO 99). "Breasts" considers toxic poisons in human breast milk:

But the breast is a filter--

The poison stays there, in the flesh.

Heavy metals in traces

deadly molecules hooked up in strings

that men dreamed of,

Never found in the world til today.

(in your bosom
 petrochemical complex
 astray) (AH 103)

The poem goes on to suggest that toxins are trapped in breast tissue in order to keep the poison from reaching infants via breastmilk.⁵⁰ In a discussion of Toni Morrison's novels, Mae Henderson identified breast milk as a literalized symbol of the nourishment of the future (J. Wyatt 486), a symbolism we also saw operating in Hogan's "Milk." L. Edwin Folsom finds breast cancer to be a recurring symbol of environmental degradation in Snyder's work (113).

Snyder's prose writings also frequently address threats to the human species and the earth's environments. In "Four Changes" he urges "a reverence for other species, and future human lives, most of which are threatened" (TI 93). Although this essay was originally written in 1969 and published in Turtle Island in 1974, it is republished in Snyder's most recent book of essays, A Place in Space. In a 1995 postscript to this most recent reappearance, Snyder writes:

The apprehension we felt in 1969 has not abated. It would be a fine thing to be able to say, "We were wrong. The natural world is no longer as threatened as we said then." One can take no pleasure, in this case, in having been on the right track. . . . Naive and utopian as some of it sounds now, I still stand by the basics of "Four Changes" (PS 46).

⁵⁰ In the interests of factuality, the breast is a very poor filter. Breast milk is a major source of toxic chemical contamination in human infants. See Colborn.

In a speech made on Earth Day 1990, Snyder specifically addressed the dangers of environmental degradation to human reproduction (PS 59).

These fears of destruction are not as great a portion of Snyder's work as his far more prevalent focus on fecundity of all kinds. Over and over in his poetry, we see an emphasis on the fertility of all things: humans, animals, languages, cultures, and the earth itself. The utopian vision of "A Heifer Clambers Up" is "fat / with the baby happy land" (BC 18). "Kyoto Born In Spring Song" lists all young creatures as "tiny precious" babies: baby melons, bamboo, birds, mice, worms, lizards, centipedes, cats, and humans. This evidence of fertility is spiritual; it is the "Great majesty of Dharma turning / Great dance of Vajra power."⁵¹ It is also specifically contrasted to industrial production and replication: "Bushmen are laughing / at the coyote-tricking / that made us think machines" (RW 19).

In "Dragonfly," a dead dragonfly is asked: "Did you leave your seed child / In a mountain pool / Before you died" (LO 155). The phrase "seed child" is important because, like the "babies" in "Kyoto Born In Spring Song," it serves to blur distinctions between the offspring of humans and insects and plants. This blurring of distinctions between species is typical of much holistic environmental writing. It is, for example, reminiscent of the species blurring of Mary Oliver's non-realistic umbilical imagery. And as we saw in Oliver's work, Snyder's focus on fecundity can be read as a compensatory strategy in response to the threat of human extinction.

⁵¹ Gary Snyder, "Kyoto Born In Spring Song," Regarding Wave (NY: New Directions, 1970) 18. Hereafter abbreviated RW.

It is a particularly important strategy for Snyder. Charles Molesworth notes the importance in Snyder's work of the concept of interbirth (Gary 6), which Snyder defines as the idea that "we are actually mutually creating each other and all things while living." Snyder links the concept of interbirth to a vision of nature as holistically interconnected, and to the Buddhist symbol of Indra's jeweled net.⁵² This concept informs Snyder's view of all cultural productions: "Every living culture and language is the result of countless cross-fertilizations--not a 'rise and fall' of civilizations, but more like a flowerlike periodic absorbing--blooming--bursting and scattering of seed" (EHH 126). Snyder expands on this idea with his use of ecologist Eugene Odum's concept of biomass. In "Energy is Eternal Delight," he writes, "The treasure of life is the richness of stored information in the diverse genes of all living beings" (TI 103). In "The Etiquette of Freedom," Snyder describes language as an "infinitely interfertile family of species spreading or mysteriously declining over time, shamelessly and endlessly hybridizing."⁵³

Although such rhetoric participates in the trope of genetics as text discussed in Chapter One, Snyder does not confine these interrelationships to a linguistic realm. In "A Village Council of All Beings," he complains that the Darwinian notion of "evolutionary and genetic kinship with other species" is "accepted intellectually but not personally and emotionally by most people" (PS 76). The idea of interspecies relationships is a

⁵² Gary Snyder, "Poetry and the Primitive: Notes on Poetry as an Ecological Survival Technique," Earth House Hold: Technical Notes & Queries To Fellow Dharma Revolutionaries (NY: New Directions, 1969) 129. Hereafter abbreviated EHH.

⁵³ Gary Snyder, "The Etiquette of Freedom," The Practice of the Wild: Essays (NY: North Point-Farrar, 1990) 7. Hereafter abbreviated PW.

formative one for Snyder, and can be traced back in his work to his undergraduate thesis which examined a Native American myth about women who marry bears. In a commencement speech at Reed College in 1991, Snyder urged "the possibility of full membership in a biotic erotic universe" through "trans-species erotics" (PS 210-11). Many of his poems reflect these ideas. "Charms" expatiates upon the loveliness of females of "each mammal species," which is "the Delight / at the heart of creation" (TI 28). In "Toward Climax," he describes the mingling of "bands and families in and out like language / kin to grubs and trees and wolves" (TI 83). In "Old Rotting Tree Trunk Down," he describes the rotting tree trunk of the title as a "[b]eautiful body": "If 'meditation on decay and rot cures lust' / I'm hopeless: / I delight in thoughts of fungus" (AH 105).

In many of these poems, the fertile world is figured as female, and human interactions with the world are sexualized. A good example of this mode in Snyder is the sequence of erotic songs in Regarding Wave. The gerunds and present-tense verbs of these poems emphasize the immediacy of these interactions with the world. In the landscape of "Song of the Tangle," "Two thigh hills hold us at the fork / round mount center." Vines become "the tangle of the thigh // the brush / through which we push" (RW 14). The women in "Song of the Slip" are an ocean where the speaker's dream is "to beach high on the dark shoal / seed-prow // moves in and makes home in the whole" (RW 15). "Song of the Taste" conflates all the world's genetic material--animal and vegetable (and human)--into one happy feast where we are "Eating each other's seed / eating / ah, each other, // Kissing the lover in the mouth of bread: / lip to lip" (RW 17). Critics like

Annette Kolodny have shown us the many clichéd and sexist ways the woman-as-landscape metaphor has been used, but the emphasis on interaction in these poems tends to depict a more egalitarian relationship. Dorothy Nielson argues that Snyder's concepts of biomass and interspecies communication allow him to avoid "the problem of projection." Instead of anthropocentrically talking to the animals, Snyder listens to them. His "model of information-transfer" works "not from the human to the other but from the other to the human" (706).

In a parallel manner, Snyder's avoidance of projection and his egalitarian tone keep his poetry relatively free of sexism despite his frequent focus on the image of woman-as-symbol. As I have been saying, many of Snyder's poems are examinations of the family as a reproductive unit threatened by environmental dangers. In a way, environmental dangers are to Snyder's family romances what the Oedipal complex was to Freud's. Just as the son must successfully negotiate the Oedipal conflict to reach psychologically mature manhood, Snyder's families must invent ways to live in harmony with their environments in order to create mature human societies. Snyder's holistic emphasis on healthy cultures replaces Freudian emphasis on the health of individuals, and so avoids much of the sexism inherent in many Freudian perspectives. Snyder's conceptions of the healthy family can be just as prescriptive in tone as any Freudian's, however. The religious and spiritual components of Snyder's work, while often emotionally moving, can lead him into preaching. Snyder had many years of formal religious training with Zen Buddhist monks in Japan, a biographical fact he uses to great rhetorical advantage in his writings on spiritual values. Although he continues to speak

very respectfully of this experience, he has criticized celibate monastic traditions in general: "One of the things I learned from being in Japan and have come to understand with age is the importance of a healthy family. The family is the Practice Hall."⁵⁴ While Snyder's views tend to be more palatable, at least to me, than those of many contemporary proselytizers of "family values," they are not necessarily any less self-righteous.⁵⁵

Despite his general variance from the Freudians, Snyder does not avoid the Oedipal scenario altogether, since he frequently conflates the roles of wife and mother. Such conflations, however, tend to sound less like Oedipal fantasies than Jungian archetypes. Some of the most intense examples of Snyder's fecundity poems are those dedicated to his wives. In these poems, Snyder conflates his wives with various goddesses and with the archetypal Earth Mother; the women addressed in these poems come to represent life itself.⁵⁶ "The Manicheans" is dedicated to his first wife, Joanne Kyger. Their lovemaking is conflated with the galaxy: "Two million years from M 31 .

⁵⁴ Gary Snyder, "The East West Interview," by Peter Barry Chowka, The Real Work: Interviews & Talks 1964-1979, ed. with an intro. by Wm. Scott McLean (NY: New Directions, 1980) 106. Hereafter abbreviated Real.

⁵⁵ In a recent (1996) interview, Snyder comments: "I'm urging people not to get stuck with that current American catch-phrase 'family values,' and not to throw it away either, but to translate it into community values. Neighborhood values are ecosystem values, because they include all the beings" (qtd. in Carolan 24).

⁵⁶ In a 1980 foreword to a book by Edward Schafer about Chinese goddesses, Snyder is refreshingly less devout: "Being goddesses in civilized times never did real women much good" (PS 89).

the galaxy in Andromeda-- semen is everywhere . Two million seeds in a spurt."

The fire of the suns is reflected in the "radiating warmth" of their bodies.⁵⁷ Laughter "[i]s an earthquake in your thigh." Together they undergo some prehistoric devolution:

Your body is fossil

As you rest with your chin back

-- your arms are still flippers

--your lidded eyes lift from a swamp

Finally, like fossils, they are embedded under "[b]lankets like rock-strata fold" where they are also the divine Shiva and Shakti (BC 82-83). The extreme shifts of scale in both time and space in this poem are similar to the shifts of scale in "Axe Handles."

Regarding Wave is dedicated to Snyder's second wife, Masa Uehara. "Wave" conflates Masa with both the landscape (or, in this case, seascape) and the voice of the Muse: "Wave wife. / woman--wyfman-- / 'veiled; vibrating; vague.'" The etymological musings suggest the continuity and interrelationships of both languages and generations. He asks his "trembling spreading radiating wyf" to inspire him: "catch me and fling me wide / To the dancing grain of things / of my mind!" (RW 3). In "Burning Island," Snyder asks a blessing on his marriage, and addresses Masa as "Earth Mother":

I have wrappt my hand

over the jut of your cobra-hood

sleeping;

⁵⁷ "The Manicheans" is somewhat reminiscent of John Donne's "The Sun Rising," right down to the Metaphysical title.

left my ear

All night long by your mouth (RW 24).

David Robbins notes that with her breath in his ear, Masa is literally inspiring Snyder (102). Robbins finds in "Burning Island" "the ancient ritual of marriage as a cosmogonic event, signifying creation's renewal" (92). Snyder himself has insisted that the Earth Mother is his muse: "[T]he voice that speaks to me as a poet, what Westerners call the Muse, is the voice of nature herself, whom the ancient poets called the great goddess, the Magna Mater. I regard that voice as a very real entity" (TI 107).

While Snyder does write about his marriages in cosmic terms, the insistence of even this rhetoric pales beside the intensity with which he writes about his children. As we saw in "Axe Handles," he continually portrays his children as the culmination of eons of both cultural and physiological evolution. Simultaneously, his children, and by extension their generation, are the source of all hope for the future. Snyder's insertion of his personal family life into the broad canvasses of human and natural history and myth serves to mythologize and in a sense sanctify (at least literarily) his own life. His continued assertions of the world's fecundity are also attestations of his own fertility, both physical and literary. The cultural achievements of ancient civilizations become, in his poetry, coextensive with the occupations of his grandparents. Snyder's representation of future generations in the figures of his sons makes his poetry appealingly personal, but also makes him the wise father of futurity. I find in these constructs an insistent demand for a bolstering niche in a human history and future threatened by environmental collapse, and this demand is what I see as Snyder's reproductive anxiety. His emphasis

on the continuance of future generations is a hopeful one in the context of his environmentally aware work, but it makes a point that would be unnecessary if it were not so in doubt. If future generations were assured, their continuance would not need to be emphasized.

Snyder's poem on the conception of his first son, "It Was When," describes several scenes of outdoor lovemaking when conception could have occurred, and concludes Masa has been, goddess-like, impregnated by the elements: "Waves / and the / prevalent easterly breeze. / whispering into you, / through us, / the grace" (RW 31). The association of Masa with the ocean is consistent with the overall imagery of Regarding Wave, and continues in the poem on the birth of their son Kai, "Kai, Today." In this poem, Snyder juxtaposes a description of Kai's birth with a vision of dolphins leaping out of the Masa-sea.⁵⁸

Bob Steuding suggests that Snyder is himself "reborn" through Kai's birth (140), which is in some respects true, although not simplistically so. One of the most appealing things about Snyder's poems about his children is that he affords them the same respect he holds for other living things. His sons are not junior reflections of their father, but unique human beings with their own complicated histories. For example, in "Eastward Across Texas" Kai is mistaken for a Vietnamese refugee by a waitress in Snyder, Texas. Snyder's response is not that of paternal outrage at presumptuous waitresses, but bemusement and meditation on the accidents of history and archeology that will be

⁵⁸ Bob Steuding notes that in public readings Snyder has explained the dolphin image as an actual vision (139).

interpreted by the future (AH 38). "Low winter sun . . ." establishes a basic equality between Snyder, his ten-year-old son, and their cat (LO 135).

It is not so much that Snyder is reborn in his sons as that he is assured of the continuance of human cultural and genetic materials, including but not exclusively his own. Consider these lines from the central stanza of "Kai, Today":

before Masa and I met
What's your from-the-beginning face?
Kai.
born again
To the Mother's hoarse bear-down
groan and dark red mask:

"From-the-beginning face" is an allusion to the Zen koan, "What is your original face before your mother and father were born?" In a Zen context of reincarnation, the line "born again" almost surely refers to Kai Snyder, not to Gary Snyder. This reading is supported by the mythologizing of Masa into a monumental, capitalized, and masked Mother. The poem is about not only this incarnation of Kai, but the process of incarnation itself and its connections to the fecundity of the world. If Snyder is personally reborn at all, the implication here is that this occurs through Masa rather than Kai, since "before Masa and I met" has been substituted for the "before your parents were born" part of the koan.

There is of course no question that fatherhood changed Snyder's life. His awareness of this change is given in "Not Leaving the House," where he describes staying

inside with his family after Kai's birth and "making a new world of ourselves around this life" (RW 34). Scenes of family life continue to appear in Snyder's subsequent books, and they continue to be linked to larger environmental concerns and not merely personal domestic bliss. In "The Bath," for example, the loving physical descriptions of Snyder's wife and children lead to the refrain "this is our body"; but so does a description of the surrounding landscape, which is also part of "our body" (TI 12-14). In "What Happened Here Before" (TI 78-81), his sons' questions ("who are we?") are contextualized by millions of years of geologic and human history--a shift of relative scale even greater than that of "Axe Handles."

Snyder consistently conflates the lives and futures of his children with the fate of the human species facing environmental crisis. This theme permeates his work even in its incidental details. In "The Etiquette of Freedom," Snyder performs an etymological exercise which basically summarizes his thematic concerns:

The word *nature* is from Latin *natura*, "birth, constitution, character, course of things"--ultimately from *nasci*, to be born. So we have *nation*, *natal*, *native*, *pregnant*. The probable Indo-European root (via Greek *gna*--hence cognate, agnate) is *gen* (Sanskrit *jan*), which provides *generate* and *genus*, as well as *kin* and *kind* (PW 8).

In this passage, we see Snyder's linking of environmental and reproductive concerns. We should also note that in addition to being an Indo-European root word, "Gen" is also the first name of Snyder's second son. Sherman Paul thinks that the pictographs that

decorate the pages of Turtle Island, in addition to evoking the prehistoric civilizations praised in the poems, also call to mind illustrated children's books (Hewing 321).⁵⁹

This important thematic emphasis on his children is complemented in Snyder's work by the poetic use he makes of his parents. Like his children who are conflated with the future of the human species in a damaged environment, Snyder's parents and his personal heritage are conflated with human environmental history. The indictment of the materialistic destructiveness of American culture in "In the Night, Friend" is juxtaposed with a listing of his father's material belongings, a list which includes "a wife, / two children. two acres, and two cows" (RW 52). The implication that family members are chattel is one of the destructive attitudes towards living things, human and nonhuman, indicted in this poem. Even the nostalgic memories of his father and his father's friends in "Makings" are contextualized within American postwar industrial prosperity: "It seems like since the thirties / I'm the only one stayed poor" (LO 56). The tension between sentiment and history is evident throughout all of Snyder's writings on his parents. Perhaps the best example of this is "Dusty Braces," which condemns his forebears while according them the traditional Buddhist bows of respect for ancestors:

you bastards
my fathers
and grandfathers, stiff-necked

⁵⁹ In considering the visual aspects of Snyder's books, it is also worth noting that the New Directions paperback editions of Turtle Island and Regarding Wave feature group photographs of Snyder with his family where the brooding solo poet picture usually goes.

punchers, miners, dirt farmers, railroad-men

killed off the cougar and grizzly

nine bows. Your itch

in my boots too,

--your sea roving

tree hearted son (TI 75).

Note that the mythic and archaic tone of the adjectives "sea roving" and "tree hearted" serve to connect the son to his ancestors even more closely.

Snyder makes less frequent poetic use of his mother, perhaps because he already has an archetypal mother figure available in his poems about Masa. However, Turtle Island is dedicated to his mother. Snyder has also spoken of the influence on his work of his mother, who was a journalist.⁶⁰ He suggests in one interview that a strong mother-son relationship is especially important to male poets:

I think that there is quite obviously an intense and deep connection between mother and son, and that the son's relationship to the complex tooth-mother ecstatic-mother type is apt to produce environmentally,

⁶⁰ For the influence of Lois Snyder on her son, see his interview with Kherdian, and also essays by Baker and Mahar. While there is no official biography available, Snyder talks briefly about his personal background in his interviews with Kherdian and Cook and in several of his collected essays.

psychologically, genetically, by whatever means, the line of magic that produces poetry (Real 80).

Although Snyder's language here is Jungian, at least one theorist has used a Lacanian viewpoint to link early childhood issues and an environmental outlook. Sue Ellen Campbell suggests an analogy between an ecological sense of a lost unity with nature and the psychological loss of access to the maternal realm of the Lacanian presymbolic, that scene of preverbal communication experienced between mothers and infants prior to the language acquisition which initiates the rule of the symbolic and the Law of the Father (209). Campbell's analogy resonates with Snyder's work due to his general emphasis on both etymology and the subconscious or deep consciousness which provides access to prehistoric states of mind. In many of his poetic prehistoric family forays, Snyder makes use of the metaphorical and partially actual mirroring of ontogeny and phylogeny.

Snyder's most powerful family poems are those wherein he juxtaposes his ancestors and descendants, his parents and his children. Such a juxtaposition has the effect of making Snyder himself the center and pivot of human history. The multigenerational human communities peopling such poems are invested with ecological values. Snyder has compared multigenerational human communities to the multigenerational growth of healthy forests, a particularly apt example given the history of logging as a trade in his own family background. In his essay "Ancient Forests of the Far West," Snyder argues:

The human community, when healthy, is like an ancient forest. The little ones are in the shade and shelter of the big ones, even rooted in their lost old bodies. All ages, and all together growing and dying. What some silviculturalists call for--"even-age management," plantations of trees the same size growing up together--seems like a rationalistic utopian totalitarianism. We wouldn't think of letting our children live in regimented institutions with no parental visits and all their thinking shaped by a corps of professionals who just follow official manuals (written by people who never raised kids.) Why should we do it to our forests? (PW 138)

Snyder continues this family/tree metaphor elsewhere, further linking the issues of environmental devastation and human reproduction. In an essay entitled "Survival and Sacrament," Snyder speculates that the vanishing trees of the rainforest are being reborn as unwanted children forced to live on urban streets (PW 176).

A good example of the intensity of Snyder's multigenerational poems is "The Egg." In this poem, he admires the symmetrical and evolutionary beauty of his son's body:

the center line,
with the out-flyers changing
--fins, legs, wings,
feathers or fur,
they swing and swim

but the snake center
 fire pushes through:
 mouth to ass,
 root to
 burning, steady,
 single eye (TI 37).

These very rich lines work on multiple levels. On the surface, sentimentally and engagingly, they are lines of parental adoration, the fascinated inventory of one's child's physical perfections. The evolutionary references give this inventory a scientific aspect. A spiritual tone is also present in the references to the "snake center" and "single eye," which I read as the chakras of yoga, centers of energy flow which are both physical and spiritual. Finally, a man gazing on his son's body and contemplating snakes and single eyes is inescapably invoking notions of phallic fertility. The next stanza observes motions in the windy, "changing" landscape, and this emphasis on change carries the motion of the preceding evolutionary changes into the present, implying evolution as a continuing force and the participation of the land itself in this family scene.

The next few stanzas compare the sensations of holding his son's hand and his "Mother's old / soft arm" in the process of "helping up the / path." Again we have, on the surface, a scene of familial loving care. This scene is now extended across three generations, with Snyder himself as the central link in a multigenerational chain. (It is difficult not to read this poem biographically, since his son's name, Kai, is given in the poem.) The image of a path, however, returns us to the evolutionary route mentioned

above, and also reminds us of the presence of a physical landscape to be traversed. In a sense, Snyder has placed himself at the center of physical and evolutionary space and time.

The final stanzas of the poem return to the compact imagery of the beginning, and also refer back to the epigraph from Robert Duncan: "A snake-like beauty in the living changes of syntax.":

the neck bones,
 a little thread,
 a garland,
 of consonants and vowels
 from the third eye
 through the body's flowers
 a string of peaks,
 a whirlpool
 sucking to the root.

It all gathers,
 humming,
 in the egg (TI 38).

The sinewy images of neck bones, thread, garland, string, and root coalesce with the earlier snake imagery and all of its associations, while also evoking some of the physical frailty of the elderly mother and the young son. The short lines lend the poem a long

root-like appearance on the page. The introduction of language as part of both species evolution and individual development enriches the poem on a literary level, and is an important general theme in Snyder's work. The natural images of flowers and peaks link the landscape directly to the human body, and contribute to the sexual imagery of the whirlpool and the root. Finally, it does all gather in the image of the egg, a self-reflexive symbol which includes the eponymous poem in its meanings. The egg is both a symbol of individual sexual and familial reproduction, and of a more general sense of rebirth. The image of the egg works on both microcosmic and macrocosmic levels. Microcosmically, it represents the wonder of intricate, encyclopedic genetic information transferred via microscopic gametes and resulting in perfectly lovely, extremely complex children. Macrocosmically, it represents the continuation of species and culture; the snake is Ourobouros cycling and recycling, both the "snake center" of each individual body and the circle enclosing the world. The stability and rootedness of the circle nevertheless provides for genetic and cultural variations through the destabilizing but eternal feminine image of the spiraling whirlpool, through the mother here respectfully capitalized, perhaps to indicate the Great Mother of all. "The Egg" combines personal, cultural, environmental, and spiritual concerns in a consideration of reproductive issues. In terms of relative scale, however, these weighty concerns are perhaps too burdensome for one young boy's frail body to carry. That Snyder places them there anyway may simply be parental pride and love, but I read this emphasis as a symptom of reproductive anxiety in a world with an uncertain environmental future.

Consideration of ancestors and offspring in an environmental context is a consistent theme in Snyder's work. "At the Ibaru Family Tomb, Tagami village, Great Loo Choo: Grandfathers of my sons" describes a family visit to the Ibaru family tomb in Japan during which the Snyders sing songs about long-vanished landscapes (AH 36). In "The Years," Snyder observes his rapidly growing children alongside the coming of new grass, the planting of more trees, and the movements of the stars (LO 117).

Many of the themes of "The Egg" are repeated in the more recent, more discursive, and darker poem "Word Basket Woman." This poem shifts its primary focus from the offspring to the ancestors, which may account for its more solemn tone. The focus on the ancestors is accompanied by historical allusions, and the unhappiness of most of this history also contributes to the solemnity of the poem. The first two stanzas allusively consider the role of literature in the face of death. One celebrates an unnamed poet of the Warsaw uprising: "small poems were all / that could hold so much / close to death."⁶¹ The next alludes to poet Robinson Jeffers: "he also / feared death, insignificance." In the third stanza we get the first appearance of the first person pronoun: "I dwell." Here Snyder describes his geographical location ("the long west slope / of Sierra Nevada, two hundred mile / swell of granite") without reference to any geopolitical locations, such as cities, states, or countries. This elision of geopolitical terminology is a usual practice for Snyder, and is in keeping with his bioregional politics outlined in Turtle Island and elsewhere. In "Four Changes," Snyder specifically urges

⁶¹ Gary Snyder, "Word Basket Woman," No Nature: New and Selected Poems (NY: Pantheon, 1992) 371. Hereafter abbreviated NN.

"[d]ivision by natural and cultural boundaries rather than arbitrary political boundaries" (TI 100). In fact, the title of Turtle Island is a reference to Native American names for the North American continent. However, this elision of the geopolitical also serves to mark his separation from a Euroamerican history which is geopolitically located, first in Warsaw and later in the poem in Kansas. This is not simply a matter of politically correct nomenclature; Snyder also describes his abode as a spiritual location: "bones of the Ancient Buddha, / . . . / on a line of fiery chakras / in the deep nerve web of the land."

The poem dismisses the impact of Euroamerican history except as it has influenced language and, by extension, literature:

Europe forgotten now, almost a dream--
but our writing
is sidewise and roman, and the language
a compote of old wars and tribes from some
place overseas. . . .

The rest of the stanza insists that "the heart / words" of his spiritual abode are the names of various Native Californian peoples: "Pomo, Miwok, Nisenan." These are the languages of the "small poem word baskets." The "small poems" of the Warsaw ghetto have been placed within the Native American "word baskets," thus linking the two instances of genocide. In this sense, even though the Euroamerican cultural productions of Warsaw and Robinson Jeffers have given way to Native American cultural productions, the decimation and in some cases the extinction of these Native Californian peoples somewhat dooms their use as a cultural option. In his essay "The Etiquette of

Freedom," Snyder specifically discusses the decline of Nisenan as a living language (PW 3-4).

The poem ends with a description of Snyder's visit to his great-grandmother's grave in Kansas. Although he describes her name on the gravestone as "almost eaten away," he gives it in his poem and thereby grants her the literary immortality of an elegy. He accords the grave of his grandmother spiritual qualities similar to those of his own abode. He surrealistically enters the grave and engages in atavistic ancestor worship:

on my knees, closed my eyes
and swooped under the earth
to that loam dark, holding her emptiness
and placed one cool kiss
on the arch of her white
pubic bone (NN 372).

The emphasis on the grandmother's pubic bone is of course a celebration of her fertility, the fertility that eventually produced the poet. One thinks of the Great Mother imagery of an earlier poem, "For a Fifty-Year-Old Woman in Stockholm", which describes the mummified Bäckaskog woman:

You gave birth nine times:
The dent in the bones
in the back of the pelvis
mother of us all,

four thousand years dead (AH 107).⁶²

As a generational poem, however, "Word Basket Woman" is an odd mix of ancestors: historical, literary, and personal. Odder still is the poem's claiming of Native American ancestors. That Snyder's great-grandmother is literally part of this land, that the symbolic bones of her fertility, Snyder's "roots," are not in Europe, is important. It is as if Snyder is "Nativizing" his great-grandmother. She is the "Word Basket Woman" of the title, a Native American container of ancestral, linguistic, and botanical "roots." In his essay "Tawny Grammar," Snyder designates "the fundamental all-time values of our species" as "grandmother wisdom": "People today are caught between the remnants of the ongoing 'grandmother wisdom' of the peoples of the world . . . and the codes that serve centralization and hierarchy" (PW 56-57). L. Edwin Folsom discusses Snyder's archaeological search for origins as a descent through an American historical palimpsest to unearth environmental values.

The nativizing rhetoric of "Word Basket Woman" comes through even more clearly in a 1985 journal entry Snyder made describing his trip with his son to his great-grandmother's grave, presumably the biographical source of the poem. His journal emphasizes the multigenerational concerns of his poems: "I tell Gen, 'Now you've touched the far ends of your ancestry. You've been to the tomb of the Ibaru clan in Okinawa and you've seen your great great grandmother's headstone in Kansas.'" The journal entry specifically emphasizes the markings on the sandstone gravestone, which

⁶² One also thinks, of course, of Seamus Heaney's wonderful Bogpeople poems in North.

consist of the dead woman's name and of the handprint of her son, Snyder's great-uncle. These markings are linked to paleolithic Native American cave markings later in the journal entry when the Snyders visit "a cave on the side of a rocky hill. Soft sandstone. There are the names of Euro-Americans of the last century scratched here and there, and higher up and deeper in the elder petroglyphs" ("Harriet" 172-73). Cave paintings are an important symbol of origins for Snyder, who considers them "the world's largest single art tradition" (qtd. in Folsom 104). In Earth House Hold, he utilizes a dating system of "reckoning roughly from the earliest cave paintings," so that 1967 is given as 40067 (143).

Snyder's claim of Native American roots through the nativization of his great-grandmother marks an important tension in his work. Native American themes are ubiquitous in Snyder's poetry, which is perhaps not surprising given his academic background in anthropology.⁶³ In part because of this academic background, Snyder handles Native American materials with great sensitivity, depth, and accuracy.⁶⁴ However, he also romanticizes pre-European-contact America as an environmental utopia, and urges a return to the practices and values of that time as the remedy for our

⁶³ Although mine is not a dissertation on Snyder's Native American thematics, one does exist. It is William Jungels's "The Use of Native-American Mythologies in the Poetry of Gary Snyder" (University of California, Davis, 1973).

⁶⁴ For an example of Snyder's academic precision, see his reviews of books about Native American mythology in Earth House Hold. He criticizes one author for her "capricious" (27) classification system and for neglecting to mention an unpublished dissertation.

contemporary environmental and social ills. Snyder's rhetoric on this issue is a striking departure from the academic:

There are tens of millions of people in North America who were physically born here but who are not actually living here intellectually, imaginatively, or morally. Native Americans to be sure have a prior claim to the term native. But as they love this land they will welcome the conversion of the millions of immigrant psyches into fellow "Native Americans." For the non-Native American to become at home on this continent, he or she must be *born again* in this hemisphere, on this continent, properly called Turtle Island (PW 40).

The references to conversion and being born again mark this as the rhetoric of spiritual redemption. In fact, there are parallels between the rhetoric of this passage and that of much contemporary conservative political discourse about immigration. Conservatives also urge immigrants to assimilate, to convert and be born again as Americans. They also demand agreement as proof of patriotism: "as they love this land." In the same 1990 essay, "The Place, the Region, and the Commons," Snyder calls for a "worldwide purification of the mind" (PW 40). While Snyder is obviously not a traditional right-wing conservative, the tone of some of his rhetoric would not be out of place at a conservative Republican convention.

This observation raises a question that crosses my mind when most Republicans are speaking: the question of mandate. Snyder's use and advocacy of Native American cultural materials has been heavily criticized by Native American writers and critics, who

view Snyder as part of, and perhaps the founder of, "whiteshamanism" (W. Rose 418).

Whiteshamanism is a derogatory term, coined by Native American critic Geary Hobson, for non-Native American "New Age" practitioners and other cultural figures who appropriate Native American cultural knowledge and practices. Asked about whiteshamanism in an interview, Linda Hogan replied: "My friend Shelly, a Grand Portage Indian, said that in a lot of ways it was like looking at Jews in concentration camps and saying, 'Oh, aren't they beautiful people and isn't Jewish mysticism wonderful'" (76). In a 1985 interview, Paula Gunn Allen said, "I get annoyed when Gary Snyder gets a Pulitzer Prize for Turtle Island (1974) and Simon Ortiz doesn't get a Pulitzer Prize for Going for the Rain (1976). I mean, that's crazy, crazy thinking" (29). Allen's annoyance here stems from the perception of Turtle Island as the most "Indian" of Snyder's books.

Opponents of whiteshamanism argue that appropriation of Native American cultural materials, including stories, songs, rituals, and myths, is an act of cultural imperialism, and even of genocide. Here is former American Indian Movement leader Russell Means on whiteshamanism:

What's at issue here is the same old question that Europeans have always posed with regard to American Indians, whether what's ours isn't somehow theirs. . . . We are resisting this because spirituality is the basis of our culture; if it is stolen, our culture will be dissolved. If our culture is dissolved, Indian people *as such* will cease to exist. By definition, the causing of any culture to cease to exist is an act of genocide. . . . So,

maybe this'll give you another way of looking at these culture vultures who are ripping off Indian tradition. It's not an amusing or trivial matter, and it's not innocent or innocuous. And those who engage in this are not cute, groovy, hip, enlightened, or any of the rest of the things they want to project themselves as being. No, what they're about is cultural genocide (qtd. in Churchill 194).

It is clear that by accepted definitions of whiteman Shamanism, Snyder is practicing it. According to Ward Churchill, whiteman Shamanism is marked by the tendency of non-Native Americans to proclaim themselves to be Native Americans, which Snyder clearly does in his promotions of "rehabitation," the process of "becoming native" to the land. Furthermore, even the most vehement critics of whiteman Shamanism grant that its practitioners are usually sincere people with genuine good intentions towards Native Americans and Native American culture; there is no conscious genocidal motivation. Nevertheless, these critics argue, the power structure of "settler-state colonialism" under which Native Americans live in the United States "preclude[s] even the best and most sensitive . . . efforts from doing other than reinforcing and enhancing the structure of domination . . . " (Churchill 143).

Snyder has addressed the issue of whiteman Shamanism many times. In a 1979 interview, he argued that Shamanism "is a worldwide phenomenon and not limited in a proprietary sense to any one culture." On a literary level, Snyder finds the whole issue is uninteresting

because in poetry we all know we are free to lovingly use anything that's available. Nobody is going to say "you shouldn't write in English because your parents were Shoshone." Nobody is going to get on Scott Momaday's case because in his earlier writings he might have written like a Cambridge don or to tell him, "You're an Indian, man, you should write like you wore buckskins." Nobody is going to get on my case because I don't write like a Lutheran just because my great-great-grandparents were maybe Lutherans. That would really be tiresome. As artists we are all free to write about anything we like (Real 155).⁶⁵

In a 1987 interview, Snyder states: "My feeling is that the artist is a shameless thief. . . . It's not a problem for me" (qtd. in Hicks 253). In the 1995 republication of "The Politics of Ethnopoetics," Snyder states: "We are all real people. Everyone on earth is a native of this planet. All poetry is 'our' poetry. Diné poetry, people poetry, Maydy poetry, human being poetry" (PS 141).

Snyder's argument has been consistent over the years. He defends his use of Native American materials as a matter of artistic freedom in a liberal humanist tradition. However, Native American writer Wendy Rose argues that Euroamerican notions of artistic freedom are themselves imperialistic and "dovetail quite nicely with the rest of the Pioneer Spirit" (410). Rose argues that the Western ideal of artistic freedom is part of

⁶⁵ Actually, people do get on other people's ethnic cases regarding their poetry. At a November 1995 poetry reading in Boston, Brooklyn-born Puerto Rican poet and attorney Martín Espada told funny but pointed stories of being asked by sponsors of other readings to appear in his "native costume."

a larger Western valorization of the absolute freedom of the individual, a value not necessarily shared by all Native American cultures. She sees Western art as separated from mass and quotidian material culture; Western artists require freedom in order to be iconoclastic. In contrast, Native American art is more communal; it partakes of and celebrates traditional community values.

Rose's argument is interesting in that she identifies the practice of Snyder and others as pioneering in a negative sense. This is a helpful and balancing perspective to consider given the usual critical praise of this very quality in Snyder's work. Folsom, for example, says:

[I]f the Indians are no longer to be found across a geographical frontier, Snyder will seek them out across a psychic frontier, make an imaginative descent rather than a physical journey. So he retreats across the (supposedly nonexistent) frontier, away from civilization, and squeezes himself into the last vestiges of western wilderness where he writes, for the first time since [Frederick Jackson] Turner told us that the frontier was gone, the poetry of the virgin land (108).

The Native American critique helpfully highlights the historical presumptions of passages like the above. How could the land be virgin when there were established communities living on it? What generally happened to the Indians sought out by pioneers?

The Native American critique is not without its own flaws, however. For one, Rose oversimplifies Western art, which is certainly not all iconoclastic and individualist.

For another, the notion that the absolute freedom of the individual has been or is a revered mainstay of Euroamerican culture is laughable to anyone who reads history or newspapers. In our current culture of instant media access and distribution, no cultural group can remain completely untouched by others. Besides, it is difficult to reconcile calls for Native American cultural isolationism with simultaneous complaints that Native American artists deserve a larger audience. To be fair, not all Native American critics are absolutely isolationist. Wendy Rose protests only those non-Native Americans who claim to be presenting an authentic Native American artwork; she approves the acknowledgment of Native American influence in art by non-Native Americans.

Dorothy Nielson makes exactly this distinction in her article comparing the advocacy styles of Snyder and Denise Levertov. Nielson argues that Levertov's poems often use a collage method and quotation marks to indicate the heterogeneity of her sources. In Snyder's poetry, however, "it is the unproblematized adoption of another tradition into his own poetic voice that seems to be one of the primary worries of . . . Native commentators" (711-12). Nielson believes that Snyder's poetic voice evades "subjective projection onto nonhuman nature" only by displacing that projection onto Native Americans.

Nielson sees Snyder's concept of biomass as a revision of conventions of lyric voice. Biomass is a concept adapted from ecologist Eugene Odum and refers to biological information stored at the cellular level in both human and non-human nature. Taking biomass into account means that "there is more information of a higher order of sophistication and complexity stored in a few square yards of forest than there is in all

the libraries of mankind" (TI 108). By attending to the input of biomass, Snyder is able to avoid the hazards of representation entailed in speaking for nature in much lyric poetry. He doesn't speak for nature--he listens to and translates biomass. Snyder finds, however, that biomass vocalizes in archetypal symbols and prehistoric cultures, including the mythological symbols and traditional cultures of Native Americans; hence his use of Native American materials in his poetry. According to Nielson, it is by this route that Snyder "reintroduces the problems of advocacy at a cultural level" (696).

An example of this model of voice may be seen in Snyder's recent poem "Kusiwoqqóbi." Here Snyder translates the ancient smell of a pine tree ("My nose poked in the bark / Went a million years--") into the Piute word for pine tree, which is the title of the poem. He listens to the Piute voice speaking this word, which in the context of the poem has become primal and magical; but the Piute voice has merged with nature and is not heard with certainty: "I thought I heard "Kusiwoqqóbi" / A soft voice from across. From the dust, from the breeze" (NN 363). A note after the poem informs us that Snyder is accompanied on this million-year journey by his son Kai, which suggests that "Kusiwoqqóbi" continues the gesture of familial nativizing that we saw in "Word Basket Woman."

Here we see another problem with this model of voice--it assumes the "primitive" source material is some kind of pure and unmediated repository of nature transcriptions. It treats "kusiwoqqóbi" as a truer word than "pine." In this, Snyder is practicing the primitivism that marks much environmental poetry. Peter Quigley notes this difficulty, and identifies such constructions of the primitive as "[n]ostalgia for a golden age" which

also functions politically as "a typical environmental posture of resistance" (300). Whatever its value as political discourse, and perhaps because of it, Quigley is correct in asserting that "Gary Snyder's use of Hopi myth, for example, is more interesting and useful for what it says about white, male, technological dominant mythology than for what it communicates about the 'essence' of Hopi life" (305). Charles Molesworth notes the economic aspects of this problem: "The lines that separate the erection of the primitive as a value for harmonizing social and political consciousness from the utilization of the primitive as yet another marketable commodity become harder and harder to etch clearly" (Gary 76). Multinational capitalism is destructive of both traditional cultures and the environment. With this common enemy still to be reckoned with, it is unlikely that the troubled alliance between environmentalist and Native American writers will be either dissolved or resolved anytime soon.

The most constructive criticism of Snyder's work from a Native American perspective is that of Michael Castro. Castro, writing in 1983, noted that Snyder rarely explored his own ethnic heritage and ancestry except to reject it in such poems as "Dusty Braces." In this, Castro was echoing general advice of Native American critics to Euroamerican poets using Native American materials to explore their own ethnic roots (164). The nativizing of self and family that we saw in "Word Basket Woman" and "Kusiwoqqóbi" can be seen as a response to this constructive criticism. In a 1993 lecture, Snyder stresses that he instructed his own children in Native American mythology (PS 249). In the 1995 version of his essay "The Incredible Survival of Coyote," Snyder again associates his grandmother with Native Americans, suggesting that they shared the same

knowledge of edible wild plants. Since this knowledge was lost to Euroamericans with the death of his grandmother's generation and the advent of supermarkets, Snyder argues that contemporary grandmotherless Euroamericans must learn from Native Americans instead (PS 156). Putting aside the rather foolish implication that Native Americans remain untainted by supermarkets, we can see in all of these works Snyder's desire to affiliate his own family history with Native American history.

Snyder is certainly aware of deconstructive critiques of his work like Quigley's but seems to reject them as "just talk" (PS 167).⁶⁶ He seems completely comfortable conflating his own ethnic background with Native American history, which is perhaps not surprising given his previously mentioned endorsement of trans-species erotics. After all, it is consistent that someone who celebrates genetic kinship with nonhumans would assume even closer genetic kinship with other humans notwithstanding different ethnic backgrounds.

In terms of environmental reproductive anxiety, Snyder's nativizing gestures become more significant. Given the history of genocide of Native Americans in this country, Snyder is affiliating himself with a nearly exterminated race and this choice resonates with his nuclear and environmental fears for the human species. In this context, his intertwining of his own familial history with that of Native Americans reinforces his use of his family as a paradigm of endangered humanity. The pervasive, if

⁶⁶ Snyder was apparently a participant in the 1993 Reinventing Nature conference, but was not included in the resulting essay collection. In fact, he later accused the conference of having an "occulted agenda" asking "that a critique of naive and sentimental environmentalism be done by postmodern humanists and critics" (PS 250). Oddly, the essay collection as a whole is fairly hostile to postmodernism.

stereotypical, image of the "ecological Indian" resonates with Snyder's work as well. Snyder's anthropological training gives his use of this image more complexity and depth than we saw in Mary Oliver's poetry, but his romanticization of Native Americans partakes of the same logic. The disembodied voices of the Piute children in "Kusiwoqqóbi" are comparable to the vanished Shawnee and the reborn boy-Tecumseh in Oliver's "Tecumseh."

The difference between the two poems highlights Snyder's contribution. Oliver's poem is a melancholy, guilty elegy that envisions no future other than government betrayal and Native American anger. Her drink from the toxic water and her fantasy of her own death can even be read as environmental self-destructiveness. Snyder's poem, on the other hand, is more akin to Linda Hogan's work in emphasizing survival and continuance. His emphasis on his children implies a concern for his descendants and the future of the human species in general. His hopeful vision of the future, however utopian, clearly integrates his environmental, anthropological, and familial concerns:

It's our spot on earth--these mountains of northern California, Western Hemisphere, on this great blue-green globe. It is in our power, as people of the place, to shape the future here. Even though it has been logged hard and burned hot, an old-growth forest with a fire ecology can be brought back, and we will be trading a few marvelous knot-free sawlogs to the valley people in about two centuries. The wild herbs, the springs, the boulders with their glyphs will teach us. The rivers will run clearer than before, and even the fisher and the marten will return. Our houses will go

on, and the children of the future will find ways to tell finer stories than we, as newcomers, could ever hope to (PS 64).⁶⁷

Snyder's focus on the future raises the question of the expected poetic and environmental legacies of his work. Now sixty-five, Snyder's most recent books of poetry suggest that he is offering material toward an official literary canon. Left Out in the Rain (1986) collects previously unpublished poems spanning his entire career. No Nature (1992) is Snyder's first selected collection.⁶⁸ Both collections are marked by careful attention to original context in terms of providing dates, original headnotes and dedications, and chronological ordering.

It is a truism of poetry criticism that poems about the future should be read at least in part as the poet's musings about his or her ultimate literary or canonical fate. We shall see in the next chapter that this is a real concern for A. R. Ammons, but there is little of this anxiety in Snyder's work. In fact, in a 1987 interview, Snyder dismisses Harold Bloom's work on canonicity and influence as "very patriarchal" (qtd. in Hicks 253). It is interesting to compare Snyder's attitude towards Bloom to that of Ammons, who has dedicated a poem to Bloom and whose work Bloom has championed. Ever the

⁶⁷ This vision is remarkably similar to the very distant future communities described in feminist science fiction writer Ursula LeGuin's experimental environmental novel Always Coming Home, which Snyder recommends as "a genuine teaching text" (PW 178). LeGuin and Snyder are friends and occasionally collaborators on various environmental projects.

⁶⁸ In addition, there are persistent rumors that a completed version of Snyder's long poem sequence Mountains and Rivers Without End will shortly appear. Snyder's most recent interview was accompanied by an excerpt and a note that the scheduled publication date is September 1996 (Carolan 23).

paragon of evenhandedness, Bloom has officially proclaimed both Snyder and Ammons as canonical poets (Western 566-67).

Instead, and in keeping with the values promulgated in his poetry, Snyder seems more interested in his philosophical legacy. He records not only poetic influences, but also instances of the successful transmission of environmental values. His concern is for his own efficacy as a teacher. This concern is evident not only in his poems about his own legacy, but in the tribute he pays to his own teachers in his work, as we saw in "Axe Handles." In a recent essay, Snyder approvingly quotes an ancient Chinese definition of poetry's teaching function:

"Poetry is to regulate the married couple, establish the principle of filial piety, intensify human relationships, elevate civilization, and improve public morals." This is to suggest, reasonably enough, that poetry in a halfway-functioning society has an integrative role. We do recognize that poetry can make one remember one's parents, celebrate friendships, and feel tender toward lovers (PS 91-92).

His emphasis here on interpersonal relationships underlines his conception of the family as "Practice Hall," and points to the centrality of his familial themes to what he sees as the purpose of his work. In this way, Snyder's familial and physical reproductive anxiety is linked to his concern for his poetic legacy, another kind of reproduction. Even in the context of his poetic legacy, however, Snyder's concerns remain resolutely environmental. His work does not concern itself with his chances for literary

canonization but with his success in teaching others to live in environmentally sound ways. Critic Willard Spiegelman has noted the didacticism of Snyder's work (249-50).

Turtle Island, with its manifesto-like instructional essays, is practically a handbook in constructing an environmental lifestyle. We have seen Snyder's concern with his sons' environmental inheritance in "The Call of the Wild." In "One Should Not Talk to a Skilled Hunter About What is Forbidden by the Buddha," Snyder proudly notes that his son Kai reminds him to chant before skinning a fox, an example of values successfully transmitted. The "skilled hunter" of the title is of course the fox, whose hunting efficacy is evident in its described stomach contents. But Kai, who remembers to chant, is also therefore a skilled hunter who no longer needs instruction in what the Buddha forbids (TI 66). This reading continues the implications in "Kai, Today" from Regarding Wave that Snyder's son is a reincarnation of an older soul. This example of the cosmic and spiritual significance that Snyder places on quotidian activities points to the profound importance he places on the transmission of environmental lessons. This numinous imperative is present elsewhere in his work. For example, in "For/From Lew" from Axe Handles, Snyder receives a message from his dead friend: "What I came to say was, / teach the children about the cycles. / The life cycles. All the other cycles" (7). In "For The Children," Snyder's words for the "next century / or the one beyond that" are directed "to you, to / you and your children: // *stay together learn the flowers go light*" (TI 86).

In his review of Axe Handles, Sherman Paul notes Snyder's increasing concern with education as his sons reach school age (Hewing 324). We have seen these concerns

in "For/From Lew" and in the title poem. In "Painting the North San Juan School."

Snyder describes the community painting effort and his determination that "[s]omehow the children will be taught." The cultivation of young minds is compared to the risks of agricultural cultivation: "Lucky if a bare-root planting lives" (AH 21). This extra risk to "bare roots" emphasizes the importance of ancestors stressed elsewhere in Snyder's work.

Here the risk is that of learning false lessons:

Names to call the landscape of the continent

they live on

Assigned it by the ruling people of the last

three hundred years,

The games of numbers,

What went before, as told by those who

think they know it

The risks of the learning enterprise are summed up in the final image: "Ladders resting on the shaky porch" (AH 22). That Snyder views his poetry as central to his pedagogic mission is perhaps suggested by the fact that he donated his Pulitzer prize money to the building of the San Juan Ridge school (Sanfield 119).

One concept relevant to Snyder's emphasis on pedagogy is scientist Richard Dawkin's notion of the meme. The term "meme"

conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*. .

. . Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or building arches. Just as genes propagate

themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation (qtd. in Elder, Imagining 201-02).

Critic John Elder would like to see poems as memes. His use of the notion of memes resonates with the reproductive metaphors in Snyder's poetry: "all genes are direct descendants of the first DNA molecules, while memes distill and interpret the history of the human race" (Imagining 202). One problem with the meme/gene analogy, however, is that it does not take into account suppressed ideas, and implies that the unimitated is in some way not culturally viable. Given the teleological interpretations of evolution rampant in popular culture, this kind of thinking tends to support an essentialized status quo. An acceptance of the status quo as evolutionarily determined is hardly a sound basis for environmental policy.

Snyder's most recent poems continue both his concern with legacies and his valorization of the familial over the literary. In this sense, he is more concerned with genes than with memes. "For Lew Welch in a Snowfall" contrasts his own memories of his friend with a student thesis on Welch. The poem praises the continuing life "in the kitchen / Where we still laugh and cook" over academic texts resulting in "one more archive, / One more shaky text" (NN 380). "Surrounded by Wild Turkeys" describes the passing by of a flock of turkeys, "long-legged birds / all alike." The poem concludes:

So are we, in our soft calling,
passing on through.

Our young, which trail after,

Look just like us (NN 368).

Even here there is a reproductive threat, since the turkeys are passing in a "forest-fire haze." A comparison of these two poems shows that Snyder's poetry is environmentally concerned with human reproduction far more than with textual reproduction and canonization. As we shall see in the next chapter, this emphasis is one of the things that distinguishes his work from that of A. R. Ammons.

It is obviously too early for a full examination of Snyder's poetic legacy, but a brief look at his current cultural reception is revealing. Although several critics have noted the intertwining of the public and the personal in Snyder's work, no biography of Snyder has been written.⁶⁹ A few critics have mentioned the prominent role fatherhood plays in Snyder's work,⁷⁰ but most commentators have focused their examination of Snyder's personal statements on his authenticity as an environmentalist. Thomas Lyon praises "the depth and import of his [Snyder's] commitments" and exonerates Snyder from "the current solipsism" Lyon finds in other contemporary artists (45). Lyon, and other critics, attend to Snyder not only as a poet but as a model for living:

⁶⁹ On the intertwining of public and personal in Snyder's work, see Murphy and Parkinson.

⁷⁰ Mentions of the prominent role of fatherhood in Snyder's work appear in Batman and Steuding.

It seemed germane to [critic] Thomas Parkinson, early on, that Gary Snyder was a competent back-country traveler, and it is important, I think, that Snyder has tried for a level of ecological responsibility at his rural California home. When items from daily life surface in his work . . . what is being projected is recognizable as a quest for right living (47).

Perceptions of Snyder as an ecological role-model abound, and herein Snyder runs the risk of many political poets (one thinks of Adrienne Rich)--the risk of having one's poetry overshadowed by one's politics. The Sierra Club Press recently produced a coffee-table book on Snyder, entitled Gary Snyder: Dimensions of a Life, which presents hagiographic essays from Snyder's friends and relatives. Snyder's paternal accomplishments are given a prominent role in essays by personal friends and his son Gen.⁷¹ Richard Nelson specifically mentions Snyder's successful parenting as evidence of his role as a contemporary "tribal elder" (345-48). Environmental activist Dave Foreman is perhaps the most extreme. He holds Snyder up as the answer to the questions: "Who sets the standard for me as an adult?" and "Where is an example of how I should conduct myself?":

Gary Snyder. A thousand years hence, many of the new tribes of Turtle Island will have a folk hero like him--the legendary half-god, half-man who created the tribe after the collapse of the previous stage of the world (362-64).

⁷¹ See Gen Snyder and Hisao Kanaseki.

Nor is the Sierra Club the only place one finds this idolization. Electronic discussions among members of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) regularly invoke Snyder as hero. One irritated participant, scolded for insufficiently revering Snyder, sarcastically replied: "I'm sorry for ignorantly saying something against Mr. Snyder. Something must have come over me" (Hochman).⁷²

Although completely noncritical treatment of Snyder is mostly confined to environmentally-oriented groups like ASLE and the Sierra Club, there are signs that Snyder will continue to be an influential cultural figure. Besides having been canonized by Bloom, Snyder's work is included in the multicultural and canonically revisionist Heath Anthology of American Literature (Lauter). Perhaps more importantly, Snyder is in the process of being reclaimed as a countercultural figure. His early association with the Beats, and particularly with Jack Kerouac, has prompted attention to Snyder's work in the context of the current renaissance of interest in the Beat movement. One critic examines Kerouac's portrait of Snyder in The Dharma Bums as "a shining moment in the prehistory of grunge," the neopunk music and cultural movement which originated in Seattle in the late 1980s (Burton). Hozomeen Press, a small and self-proclaimedly avant-garde press in Connecticut, is trying to add Snyder to its catalog, which primarily consists of poetry by contemporary rock musicians (Timberg 11).

⁷² While the adoration ratio in academic discussion of Snyder is high, it should perhaps also be noted that much of this adoration seems personally sincere. Less academic and more gossipy reports from students at UCDavis, where Snyder teaches, unanimously concur that Snyder is indeed a nice guy. What is really interesting is the extent to which Snyder's personal charisma impacts critical writing on his work.

Snyder's cachet amongst the self-consciously trend-setting, which he would no doubt consider a type of cultural recycling, is unusual for a contemporary poet and suggests that his cultural legacy is secure for the time being. On a more basic level, Snyder's popularity also suggests the compelling relevance of his work. His emphases on spirituality and on family are productive and anti-patriarchal contributions to the ongoing debates on these topics in our culture. His environmentalist themes, including that of environmental reproductive anxiety, resonate powerfully in our increasingly ecologically-compromised world.

Chapter Five: A. R. Ammons: Sexual and Textual Reproduction

In 1970, Wendell Berry published his essay "A Secular Pilgrimage," one of the earliest pieces of environmental literary criticism, in a special issue of the Hudson Review on the topic "Poetry and Ecology." Berry's essay praises Ammons for writing a reverential nature poetry, and is followed by Ammons's lengthy poem, "Essay on Poetics." Since then, A. R. Ammons's status as an environmental poet has been secure. Criticism of Ammons's work, however, has tended to be more academic than environmental. This makes sense, since his verse is academic and scientific in both context and content. The intellectual abstraction and technical scientific vocabulary of much of his poetry, coupled with a strong tendency towards a fairly rigid social conservatism, have cost him the popular appeal enjoyed by Gary Snyder and Mary Oliver. As a result, while general overviews of environmental literary criticism grant Ammons a brief mention or passing reference, in-depth studies of Ammons have been dominated by academics like Harold Bloom, who finds Ammons's ecological strain "his largest flaw as a poet" (Ringers, 270). This chapter will show that despite Ammons's reputation for writing a poetry of remote scientific abstraction, his work addresses issues of environmental reproductive anxiety. Moreover, and more than any other poet I treat here, Ammons addresses these issues specifically in the context of the poetic enterprise itself.

Beginning with 1965's Tape for the Turn of the Year, Ammons's work has shown a specific concern with environmental degradation. The volume contains several

references to a nearby bird refuge, which is always specifically called a "refuge."

indicating an awareness and concern with environmental issues. Ammons declares:

ecology is my word: tag
 me with that: come
 in there:

 that's the door: here's
 the key: come in,
 celebrant.
 to one meaning
 that totals my meanings:⁷³

Subsequent poems often include specifically environmental outrage. The landscape in "North Jersey" is a "Ninth-circle" hell of

... refineries
 oiling the air:
 burnt reeds, a chemical
 scald: gouged land &
 shoved mounds:⁷⁴

⁷³ A. R. Ammons, Tape for the Turn of the Year (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1965) 112. Hereafter abbreviated T.

⁷⁴ A. R. Ammons, "North Jersey," Collected Poems 1951-1971 (NY: Norton, 1972) 238. Hereafter abbreviated CP.

In a poem dealing explicitly with ecological theory, "Extremes and Moderations,"

Ammons excoriates

. . . what intelligence can commit in the universe:

bleak scald of lakes, underground poisonous tides, air litter

like a dusk, clouds not like the clouds: can we give our wild

life a brake: must we keep tinkering until a virus swerves

from our interventions into a genesis consummating us: must

we spew out acids till we're their stew: lead on the highways.

washing into the grass, collecting into lead brooklets bound

for diffusive destinations: get your musclebound mercury dose

here: come on, guys: we know how to handle the overpopulation

problem: sell folks carloads of improvement marked uncertain:

progress can be the end of us: how neat . . . (CP 331)

The shift in diction in the lines above from the academic ("interventions into a genesis consummating us") to the huckstering and folksy ("get your musclebound mercury dose // here: come on, guys") betrays an early ambivalence about environmental rhetoric in Ammons's work. In striking contrast to Snyder's activism, Ammons is resolutely quietist. The political character of Ammons's work is conservative: he supports a social agenda of Reaganesque "family values" and sings the praises of liberal democracy with all the sophistication of an elementary school civics textbook, a

simplification ironic in a poet of such complexity. For Ammons, environmentalism can be a dangerously radical cause.

Several poems written around the same time as "Extremes and Moderations" worry about environmentalism as a hysterical overreaction. The title of "Working Still" implies what so many industrial spokespersons argue: that the world is still working. Ammons knows that "oxides / 'under proper atmospheric conditions' become / acids and rain a fine broad bleaching" and that "beef hormones bloom monstrous" but his "made-up / mind idles": "I won't take up the scaring cause / and can't think of a thing to uphold" (CP 276). The emotional paralysis and bureaucratic language of this poem (which even includes a chemical formula) reflect the common feeling of helplessness in the face of environmental problems often beyond the ability of individual citizens to address. "Sharp Lookout" moves from helplessness to denial. In this poem, the regular, still working, motions of nature are chronicled before the conclusion:

though I've been expecting
a wrench or unpraiseworthy re-ordering
to shock loose any moment from
lost curvatures, I've not been able
today to form evidence of any
trend countering our prospects
for a moderate life and a safe death (CP 324).

Again, the comforting conclusion is undercut by the hollow and bureaucratic language of "trend" and "prospects," and by the deflating mediocrity of "a moderate life and a safe death."

Much of Ammons's subsequent environmental work is troubled by his apparent trepidation about mixing poetry and politics. This tension is encapsulated in the final stanza of "The Ridge Farm":

I like nature poetry
 where the brooks are never dammed up or
 damned to hauling dishwater or
 scorched out of their bottoms by acids:

 there flew down midbend a catbird to
 the skinny dip, found a secure
 underwater brookstone, and began, in a
 dawnlike conclave of tranquility, to
 ruffle and flutter, dipping into and
 breaking the reflective surfaces with
 mishmashes of tinkling circlets.⁷⁵

Here the assonant and onomatopoeic poetic diction of the final lines contrasts sharply with the prosaic flatness of the opening lines of the stanza. This contrast points directly

⁷⁵ A. R. Ammons, "The Ridge Farm," Sumerian Vistas: Poems (NY: Norton, 1987) 41. Hereafter abbreviated SV.

to Ammons's fear that environmental poetry--as a type of political poetry--will sacrifice lyricism for rhetoric.

Ammons's most recent book, Garbage, is also his most explicitly environmental, dealing as it does with a visionary image of a trash dump in Florida. In this book-length meditation, Ammons is careful to keep poetry and garbage separate even as he draws connections between them:

toxic waste, poison air, beach goo, eroded

roads draw nations together . . .

.

. . . global crises

promote internationalist gettings-together,

problems the best procedure, whether they be in the

poet warps whose energy must be found and let

work or in the high windings of sulfur dioxide.⁷⁶

At times, Ammons's main environmental concern seems to be that environmental degradation may interfere with the poetic enterprise:

. . . behold, we have replaced

the meadows with oilslick: when words have

⁷⁶ A. R. Ammons, Garbage (NY: Norton, 1993) 24. Hereafter abbreviated G.

driven the sludge in billows higher than our
heads-- oh, well, by then words will have left

the poor place behind: we'll be settling
elsewhere or floating interminably, the universe

a deep place to spoil, a dump compaction will
always make room in! I have nothing to say: (G 75-76)

To have nothing to say is, of course, the end of the world, for a poet.

Reproductive anxiety--anxiety about the processes and potential for reproduction in the face of the possibility of human extinction--is a primary component of Ammons's environmental concerns. His consideration of the damaged environment in "Extremes and Moderations" leads him to consider that "the best cure"

would arise by subtle influence of itself if only we would
disappear: but though we have scalded and oiled the seas and
scabbed the land and smoked the mirror of heaven, we must try
to stay and keep those who are alive alive: . . . (CP 337)

"Hibernaculum" begins by dismissing such apocalyptic fears as the hyperbole of a younger generation's belief in a "Myth of Disaster" (CP 361) but nevertheless incorporates these fears into the definition of "man":

. . . he carries in his lobed, zoned
skull earth's little supernova, the cerebral explosion,

somewhat in its stems and exfoliations like a mushroom

cloud: in him is ticking the californium 254 he's

detected in bombs and stars . . .

.....

we're *in* the explosions and we're going to see them out

.....

. . . forward to the finish, of course, the

way it's always been or to a knowledge of how to avoid the

finish: . . . (CP 385-86)

These nuclear and environmental fears are complemented in Ammons's work by the extension of this fear into the realm of biological reproduction. Tape for the Turn of the Year punningly links nuclear and sexual anxiety: "what // to do in case of fall-out: . put it / back in & use / shorter strokes" (117-18). "Summer Session" presents sexuality as a polluted enterprise wherein women's bodies contain "a mess of bacterial bloomers." Alan Holder remarks that in this poem "the data of biology is uncharacteristically found repellent by Ammons, giving us woman as germ-carrier" (127). Such venereal risks can be avoided only through the use of prophylactic measures which render sex nonreproductive:

desire spills antiseptic gold celluloid

sheathes o'erall

and pours pellucid lubricants

down the drains of microfloral
 habitations:

The next stanza begins with the poet taking his son to the park and speculating to his wife about how long the next generation will live (CP 253).

The linked themes of pollution and reproduction continue in The Snow Poems. The future in a tainted sexual environment is the concern of "Those in Ledge Fright Seek":

with herbicides, pesticides,
 the penetration, saturation become
 systemic, what for us,
 the children of Mithridates's
 poison prick⁷⁷

Mithridates was the ancient king who protected himself from poisoners by deliberately ingesting small amounts of poison, thus building resistance. Ammons's "systemic" shift of this metaphor from the digestive to the reproductive is significant. Ammons consistently presents sexuality as a part of the natural world that shares in environmental degradation. In "But If the Way Will," Ammons remarks that it is

one thing to tongue pussy and another
 thing not to: well said, nature
 lover: less polluted these

⁷⁷ A. R. Ammons, "Those in Ledge Fright Seek," The Snow Poems. (NY: Norton, 1977) 90. Hereafter abbreviated SP.

days than acid wind or leady sleet: (SP 93)

The elegiac poems of Sumerian Vistas continue Ammons's concern with a polluted sexuality leading to death. In "The Ridge Farm," he warns of the "taming" and hence unnatural

equations of the pill, the sperm
 rage, such a wilderness, shot wild,
 why we can horse deeply in with
 irresponsibility's ease: that's what
 they say: I'm afraid nature's going
 to send the bill: it usually does:
 ferocious tallywhacker (SV 37)

The outrageous colloquialism of "ferocious tallywhacker" is humorous, and almost seems to parody the conservatism of the views expressed in this passage, but Ammons expresses such views consistently enough that they merit serious consideration.

Critic Alan Holder warns that Ammons's "streak of social conservatism . . . should not be dismissed as simply ironic" (128-29). Similarly, Willard Spiegelman finds Ammons "old-fashioned, in spite of both his concern with contemporary scientific discoveries and his seemingly cranky stylistic novelty. His crackpot antisocial gruffness, his cracker-barrel stances, his 'good ole boy' southern diction (when he feels like reverting to it) conceal but barely a true conservative" (124). Ammons is from North Carolina, and the specifically Southern tone of the conservatism that Spiegelman notes

could be seen to place Ammons in a line of descent from the Southern Agrarianists and in the company of contemporaries like James Dickey.

The specific aspect of Ammons's conservatism that concerns us here is his attitude towards sexuality.⁷⁸ As we have seen in the above examples, Ammons generally promotes the view that procreativity is the best and most natural purpose and goal of sexual relations. This emphasis on procreativity is complemented by an occasionally jarring heterosexism. Frequently, his work is marred by digressions about homosexuality that range from philosophic musings to personal statements of distaste. In themselves, such digressions add little to the poems containing them except to serve as negative contrasts to the procreative heterosexuality approved of elsewhere.

In Tape for the Turn of the Year, Ammons repeatedly compares his poem to a phallus and himself to Odysseus, both comparisons bolstering the theme of the poem. However, he makes a point of praising Odysseus (and so himself) because he "screwed a lot / but never got screwed"; "he never // 'took nothing lying down'" (29). In "Summer Session," Ammons warns against sexual deviance ("do / not go in for strange devices") and urges: "let approved channels then be your / contemplation" (CP 255). In Sphere, Ammons is unable to invoke Whitman without hurriedly distancing himself from Whitman's sexuality: "I want, like Whitman, to found // a federation of loveship, not of

⁷⁸ There are other conservative strains in Ammons's work, notably his emphasis on the United States as an organic whole ordained and supported by a natural order. Cushman discusses this aspect of Ammons's work (24).

queers but of poets. . . ."⁷⁹ "Hibernaculum" features a sequence in which Ammons first worries while hitchhiking about being "robbed, killed, or bent out of my will" by tough-looking guys" who give him a ride. He follows this vignette with a contemplation of Oscar Wilde, described as "*contra naturam*" and a "fumbling" of nature. In considering how Wilde could have loved the society that condemned his homosexuality, Ammons concludes that even condemning societies are more socially attractive than the natural world where "when a lioness / whelps a defective cub, she whomps it against the ground till it's dead" (CP 380-82). Here the natural violence of the lioness so graphically described by Ammons mirrors the violence he feared while hitchhiking and also subtly serves to naturalize gaybashing.

Admittedly, most of these examples of heterosexism were published during the 1970s, before many of the achievements of the gay rights movement earned a more widespread acceptance of homosexuality. Nevertheless, Ammons's insistent procreative heterosexuality has implications for an environmental reading of his work. Andrew Ross has noted that since the 1970s the environmental movement "has been exceptional in ceding a leading role, in theory and in practical activism, to heterosexual white men": said heterosexual white men are thereby able to exploit the concept of the wilderness in "the making of heroic white male identities: the frontiersman, the cowboy, the Romantic poet, the explorer, the engineer, the colonizer, the anthropologist, the pioneer settler, and so on." Although Ammons rarely portrays himself as doing anything more heroic than

⁷⁹ A. R. Ammons, Sphere: The Form of a Motion (NY: Norton, 1974) 125. Hereafter abbreviated S.

lawnmowing, he does participate to some degree in the "macho, redneck bonhomie" Ross finds informing some branches of the environmental movement. Ross concludes that the environmental movement provides heterosexual white men with an outlet for "the kind of passion that they have been unable to lend so easily and righteously to movements for women's liberation, gay and lesbian liberation, and civil rights for people of color" (Ross 220-21).

At another level, Ammons's emphasis on procreativity runs counter to one of the tenets of contemporary environmentalism--a commitment to curbing population growth in an overpopulated world. In keeping with his technical scientific strain, Ammons's solution to the problem of overpopulation is a technological one. Rather than meddle with the sacrosanct workings of procreative heterosexuality, humanity should solve Earth's overpopulation problem through space colonization. Ammons has made consistent use of outer space imagery throughout his career, both to offer the image of the planet Earth as seen from space as a focus for environmental meditations and to suggest space colonization as a solution to environmental problems.

The whole earth image appears frequently in Ammons's work. In "Summer Session," Ammons wonders at the "rolling / tumbling in the smoothest quietest / lunge" of "our / bristlegreen rockship, our clamorous / house" (CP 252). One apostrophic section of "Extremes and Moderations" confesses: "blue-green // globe, we have tripped your balance and gone into exaggerated / possession" (CP 340). The image is prevalent in the suggestively titled Sphere, which joyfully concludes "the orb floats, a bluegreen / wonder" (79). In a 1989 interview, Ammons spoke of the writing of Sphere as "a time

when we were first beginning to see an image of the earth from outer space on the television screen, at a time when it was inevitable to think about that as the central image of our lives" (112). Although many environmental theorists have criticized the use of the whole earth image, it remains popular with environmentalists and within popular culture.⁸⁰

More interesting than the whole earth image is the notion of humanity escaping into space, leaving the ruined earth behind. In Tape for the Turn of the Year, Ammons follows an observation about his houseplant's (and our own) civilized distance from the actual ground of earth with a vision of space colonization:

(& earth will send out
seed
in self-sufficient ships,
beading
space with possibilities--
what a separation)

(somewhere
they
may

⁸⁰ For examples of environmentalist critiques of the whole earth image, see Catherine Roach and Alexander Wilson. Roach argues that the whole earth image presents an idealized maternal image and breast fetish (50). Wilson argues that the whole earth image is part of a techno-military mapping technology in which the earth is merely another resource for exploitation (34).

take

hold

again!)(T 180)

In one passage in Sphere, Ammons combines reproductive anxiety and Star Trek's transporting technology:

. . . this afternoon I thought Jove had come to get me: I walked
into a corridor of sunlight swimming showering with turning shoals
of drift pollen and not yet knowing it was pollen thought perhaps I

was being taken or beamed aboard but saw over the roof the high swags
of the blue spruce swaying and felt stabilized from wonder:

I would still rather beget (though I can't, apparently) than be

begotten upon . . . (S 54).

Here, space technology is associated with the fertility of the pollen, his own fertility or lack thereof, and the sexual encounters of classical gods and mortals. Interestingly, although homosexual relationships in classical literature are common enough, the image here is of Jove's manifestation as an impregnating golden shower, hence Ammons's emphasis on begetting. The mythological reference to Jove resonates with earlier references in the poem to the Apollo space missions (S 28).

One section of Ammons's most recent poem, Garbage, compares his long poem to a "hardly // reassuring" "showboat" before reassuring us:

... but it's okay: we're going far

away soon into space, and ships will roll

and enmeshments of asteroids or stellar dust

confuse speed: it doesn't matter: we'll get

seed off this primordial hulk before we drown

it in throwaways:

He then imagines a society in which Neanderthals had survived extinction, but concludes that they would have been sexually deviant (63-65). The juxtaposition of Neanderthals with space travel is of course a science-fiction cliché, but it also serves to juxtapose a vision of the future with an image of human extinction. Ammons envisions the fantasy Neanderthals as servants or slaves, a concept which stresses the evolutionary dominance, so far, of *Homo sapiens*.

Critic Kevin McGuirk reads Ammons's outer-space imagery as an opportunity to perform a necessary historical contextualization of Ammons's work, which he finds too often read ahistorically. McGuirk reads Ammons's space explorations as complicit with the conception of space as the "final frontier," a conception that is intimately connected to the historical frontier ideology of the United States. According to McGuirk, Ammons's space explorations can be seen as another aspect of his social and political conservatism. McGuirk's emphasis on historicization is valuable, but the concept of outer space as the final (American) frontier has itself been criticized as ahistorical by

Leonard Lutwack, who notes that "the most decisive influence on the modern conception of space was European and occurred as early as the sixteenth century with the activity of world explorers, cartographers, and astronomers" (259). However, since much of the activity of world explorers and cartographers was performed in the context of European colonization and expansion, McGuirk's basic point about the politics of the frontier ideology remains valid. Radical feminist Mary Daly has linked the imagery of spaceships to reproductive issues in her discussion of spaceships as symbolic wombs incubating fetus-astronauts, thereby allowing the patriarchal military-industrial complex to assert its own (re)productivity while its poisonous industrial byproducts destroy the "real" fertility of Mother Earth (51-64). Despite the progressive ethos generally associated with the science-fiction worlds of space exploration, Ammons's use of this concept does not contradict his social conservatism, including his conservative view of reproductive issues. As a solution to environmental problems, space exploration has quite a way to go.⁸¹

What is most striking about Ammons's environmental reproductive anxiety is the way it is translated into a self-reflexive literary discourse. The use of biological reproductive imagery to represent literary creativity is a classic trope with a long history in Western literature and it is one of Ammons's primary metaphors. When we examine

⁸¹ In his dissertation on Ammons, Steven Schneider suggests that the space colonizations in Ammons's poetry show the influence of Carl Sagan on Ammons, positing that the two men met at Cornell University. Schneider notes that Sagan has linked environmentalism and space exploration in some of his work from the 1970s (120). Schneider specifically cites Sagan's 1973 book, The Cosmic Connection. Space exploration is such a prevalent concept in popular culture, however, that no specific source study is needed to account for its appearance in Ammons's work.

this aspect of his work through an understanding of environmental reproductive anxiety. however, we find that the fear of a degraded or dying environment is translated into anxiety that poetry is being degraded or is dying. In this fraught atmosphere, poetic canonization becomes the hope of future poetic life. The canon becomes the container of those texts chosen for preservation in the space capsule. The canon also becomes the source of fertile influence for future poets. The remainder of this chapter will examine Ammons's use of the creative/procreative metaphor, and his attempts to construct an environmentally sound canon able to save him from the suffocating and silent trash-heaps of dying poetry.

In a review of Ammons's Collected Poems 1951-1971, Geoffrey Hartman says that Ammons's work builds "on a will-to-words almost sexual in persistence" (39). Richard Howard finds Ammons "explicit about the relations of sexuality and creative mind" (14). In a 1973 interview, Ammons compares poetry to coitus:

I think that's one reason why the University cannot get closer to the imaginative moment because it's a little bit embarrassing to be that close to coitus; it's safer to talk about it than to be in it. Take a boy and a girl, they see each other. It's like the first line of a poem. It either sets up an immediate attraction so you want to know more, or it doesn't. If the attraction is there, what happens? The two people manage somehow to get close to each other and what happens next?--not silence but an outbreak of dialogue whereby they try to sense where the other person is, with the anticipation, I believe, that whatever comes of this experience

will be deepened, will be colored and made more beautiful by whatever they do know, which apparently cannot be shared in any other way, except through dialogue, through conversation and through doing things together. A poem is just that way; it begins by talking; that's all it does--talk. Because as the two people come closer and closer together, and--say everything is going to be fine--and the thing is consummated, speech begins to fail and finally there's not much more than a grunt. The reaction to a poem that is especially effective is just that--a grunt. I think the parallel is just too close to be dismissed (48-49).

Even Ammons's early work explores the relationship between sexual reproduction and poetic representation. "Configurations" considers a bird's nest as an emblem of poetic speech: "speech comes out, / a bleached form, / nest-like: // after the events of silence / the flying away / of silence / into speech--" (CP 164). The nest is, of course, where eggs are hatched. The nest becomes the equivalent of the poet's mind, "held / off-earth / by sticks" just as the poet's mind "stays / out of the ground // erect on a / brittle walk of bones" (CP 164-65). After a mournful consideration of the emptiness of the nest, save for the fallen November leaves that have drifted into it, the eighth and ninth sections of "Configurations" experiment with poetic representation:

8

I am a bush

I am a nest

I am a bird

I am a wind

I am a negg

I is a bush, nest, bird, wind, negg

I is a leaf

if I fall what falls:

the leaves fell and the birds flew away and winter came and

9

when

I

am bringing

singing those home

, two again

summer birds

comes

back (CP 165-66)

The use of the nonce word "negg" in the eighth section, following a series of self-identifying statements, is possibly an allusion to Keatsian negative capability. Ammons's implication here, however, is that this traditional Romantic *ars poetica* is insufficient and allows the poet no identity whatsoever. This difficulty is expressed through the grammatical flaw of "I is" and in the plaintive "if I fall what falls." Negative

capability is incapable of preventing the coming of winter and the desertion of the birds. The ninth stanza goes further back in poetic history in its attempt to represent the birds graphically via the conventional emblem poem. After these failures, Ammons spends several sections denying that the problem really matters. The seesawing dialogue of this poem is typical of Ammons's conversational poetic style. The denial culminates in section 12: "the bird I never saw is part of my song and / nothing else." Without the bird, however, his poem fails: "I was trying to make the song / that became my silence." Ultimately, it is only sexual reproduction that can bring the nest and the poem into existence: "the cockbird longs for the henbird / which longs for the nest / which longs for the shrub" (CP 167). The final section of the poem projects a sexualized dialogue of ambivalence onto the shrub, which has an internal debate about the possibilities of reproduction. The "woodmeat" begs to release its sap, while the "zero bark" insists "the time is not right." The reference to seasonality extends the scope of the shrub symbolization to include all of nature, although the seasonality was implicit all along in the poem in the references to the migrations of the birds. The poem ends in affirmation but without resolution: "the woodmeat is always right / but the bark is knowing" (CP 168).

In contrast to Snyder's image of the poem as a small "word basket" in "Word Basket Woman," Ammons's image of the poem as a nest completely naturalizes poetic creativity as an instinctive activity rather than a learned craft or art. Robert Bly has suggested that literature is where human beings store the kind of information many species retain as instinct, specifically mentioning the "knowledge of how to build a nest

in a bare tree" as an example (x). Bly makes this analogy in the preface to his essentialist rantings about gender relations in Iron John. It is worth noting, however, that despite Ammons's more restrained and academic style and discretion, his work shares many of Bly's essentialist premises.

Tape for the Turn of the Year includes many self-reflexive reproductive passages. Richard Howard has called the volume "a kind of satyr play" (19). Willard Spiegelman has suggested a biographical rationale for this tone, and suggests that the writing of Tape for the Turn of the Year coincided with Ammons's reaching of "the male climacteric with the possibility of sexual failure" (124). The volume does emphasize sexuality, but it is most relevant to my argument that the poem itself is sexualized. Ammons makes much of the phallic symbolism of the poem's manuscript composition: he typed the poem on an adding-machine tape which he fed into a wastebasket as he worked:

if I had a flute: wdn't
it be fine
to see this long thin
poem
rise out of the waste-
basket:
the charmed erection,
stiffening, uncoiling? (40-41)

The description of a stallion covering a mule is bracketed with descriptions of poetic composition as ejaculation:

my innermost feeling is
 a silky pouring of
 semen, a rich
 disturbance
 in the groin,
 broken loose, flowing free:

 the rich pouring
 of this verbal
 itch: (64-65)

In an apparent apostrophe to the poem itself, he urges "you" to find "the wooly / entry /
 and go free & take an / honest part / in the community" (65-66). This vision of the poem
 as active in the world is somewhat undercut, however, by the fact that the coupling of the
 stallion and mule is doomed to sterility, suggesting an analogously infertile copulation of
 poet and poem or poem and reader. In this light, it is possible that the apostrophic "you"
 is directed not at the poem but at the reader, who is urged to leave the poem and enter the
 world by a poet who worries about appearing "masturbatory" and fears that his testicles
 are missing (40). Sex and signification are linked throughout the poem, which declares
 that "a man's center is his / woman, / the dark, warm hole / to which he brings / his
 meaning." This sexual exchange is seen as "the nucleus" of all meanings, and the "center
 to the universe" (188). The emphasis on meaning as sexual further bolsters the notion of

the poem itself as sexual. At the end of the poem, Ammons punningly addresses the reader: "thank you / for coming" (205).

Despite its title image, Sphere continues the figuration of poem as phallus: "this poem is an elongated cylinder / designed to probe feeling . . . / to plunder the whoozies of the world sensationally . . ." (75). In one sexual boast, the poet as poet is phallic:

I'm a redheaded, woody pecker: stand
up, stand up for beauty, thou soldier of the breechjammed hole,
garrison gates, thou wayfarer upon the breastworks and

ramparts (ram parts), thou regular maker of meter, convivial iamb (35).

The satirically archaic poetic diction of these lines emphasizes the formal and poetic concerns of Ammons's phallic boasting.

Phallic images of the poem continue in Ammons's most recent work. In Garbage, the poem is a "spindle of energy" and "the aesthetic, scientific, moral // are organized like a muff along this spindle" (25). Poetic process is described as "a brutal burning, a rich, raw urgency":

then the mind gives way from its triggering, and
the mechanisms of necessity fall into, grasping the

upheaval, the action of making; the presence
of pressure appears, forces open a way, the

intensity heightens, groans of anguish and
satisfaction break from the depths of the

body, and the sweet dream occurs, the work
payloads, the fall-away slips through, the body

contracts and returns, ease lengthens throughout (43).

In The Snow Poems, the poetic phallus is even seen to compensate for an imperfect penis. The significantly titled "Poetry Is the Smallest" ends with a description of a "poet friend" whose "dick's so short / he can't pull it long enough / to pee straight with." The friend's wife is nevertheless "radiant," and her satisfaction is credited to the friend's sexual and poetic orality: "I notice she / follows his words / closely like one who knows what a tongue can do" (82). In his dissertation on Ammons and Theodore Roethke, Matthew Wilson finds ecological value in the oral sexuality of this poem and in other references to cunnilingus in Ammons's work: "Perhaps it might be better for the poet to perform cunnilingus on the Muse rather than have intercourse with her. Perhaps then nature poets might discover a way to approach women and landscape that would not rely on penetration. . ." (229-30). Wilson offers this suggestion as a strategy for writing "a poetry that does not violate nature" (228).

Although Wilson is correct in associating sexuality and environmental attitudes in Ammons's work, his implicit definition of penetration posits only penetration as sexual violation, and penetration as always and only violation. In her study of sexual ideologies

in pornography, Marti Hohmann especially links depictions of penetration as violation to an essentialist philosophy of gender. Such reductive definitions oversimplify Ammons's complex sexual discourse which, while resolutely heterosexual, is not exclusively oral or genital. Furthermore, sexuality in Ammons's work is presented as a means to pleasure and fulfillment, not as a method of violation and domination. Willard Spiegelman finds that it is through sexual language that "Ammons returns to the most conventional defense for poetry: pleasure" (132). The reductive attitude towards sexuality that Wilson partially endorses is typical of the strain in ecofeminist philosophy that equates pollution with rape--an equation which will be examined in the next chapter.

Ammons's emphasis on the analogy between poetic production and sexual reproduction is not confined to somatic pleasures. Many of his poems emphasize the genetic and biochemical base of reproduction, an emphasis which echoes his basic view of sexuality as ideally procreative. Miriam Marty Clark notes the importance of genetic discourse in Ammons's poetry and points out that "the poem encodes and structures reality" like a gene (5). Clark's article approaches genetics through current developments in cybernetics, but much the same point was made more organically in Steven Schneider's 1986 dissertation: "Both the poem and the cell are 'ideal organizations' because they achieve the proper balance and flow between their many discrete parts and the whole that they themselves represent" (150-51). Both Clark and Schneider focus on the gene as an image of structure in Ammons's work, without giving much consideration to the germ cells' reproductive function. This reproductive function is central to my reading of Ammons, whose statement about the "sexual basis of all things" at the

beginning of Sphere concludes with "the flurry, cell spray, finish, the haploid hungering after the diploid condition" (11).

In his dissertation on ecological and evolutionary aesthetics, W. John Coletta suggests that genetic imagery is the ecological equivalent of the deterministic worldview represented by the traditional image of the Great Chain of Being. He argues that in the double helices of DNA, "[t]he great external chain has been internalized." This internalization marks the movement of environmental control to a cognitive interior; instead of being passive respondents to the environment, humans have become conscious of our interaction with it (41). With this consciousness comes the responsibility to alleviate environmental problems, not altruistically but for the survival of the species.

The reproductive teleology of Ammons's genetics is clear even in his early work. The concepts of instinct and racial satisfaction in "Mechanism" point to an understanding that the work of the genes is not for the benefit of the individual but for the benefit of the species as a whole. "Mechanism" commands that we honor

blood compulsion, instinct: honor the

unique genes,

molecules that reproduce themselves, divide into

sets, the nucleic grain transmitted

in slow change through ages of rising and falling form,

.....

to guarantee that genes will be exchanged, male

and female met, the satisfactions cloaking a deeper
 racial satisfaction: (CP 78)

The helical shape of the lines is reminiscent of the genetic base to which Ammons here appeals.

In "Essay on Poetics," Ammons highlights the dual genetic roles of species stabilization and adaptation. In their role as stabilizers, genes guarantee that organisms will become "exactly what the locked genetic // code has pre-ordained. . . ." Random genetic mutation, however, allows a tiny margin for improvement:

. . . real change occurs along the chromosomes, a risky business
 apparently based on accident, chance, unforeseeable distortion:
 the proportion of harmful to potentially favorable mutations is

something like 50, 000 to 1: (CP 316).

The vast scope of the genetic enterprise is a source of wonder to Ammons. "History" states: "The brine-sea coupling / of the original / glutinous molecules // preserves itself all / the way up into our / immediate breaths."⁸²

In "8:45 A.M.--Doorbell Rings: Wife," Ammons writes: "we / in the formation of gene arcs, contours, / sweeps, saliences, and spirals / were tested bit to bit by / billows, swells of snowwind, / bright our sandy river, / and found to survive the astonishments" (SP 51). In some ways, it is the wild process of genetic selection and mutation that ties human beings most closely to the natural world. This conception of nature defines as

⁸² A. R. Ammons, "History," Diversifications: Poems (NY: Norton, 1975) 27.

wild all populations that have not been subjected to controlled domestic breeding--a definition that counts most human beings in most times and places as part of a wild population. Much of the current controversy over the ethics of biotechnology and gene mapping is a response to the spectre of eugenics that such technologies raise, but environmental philosophers have suggested that the fear of eugenics is itself a species fear of domestication (Evernden 120).

Ammons would seem to share this genetic definition of wilderness. In Garbage, he argues that "we [human beings] are not alone in language": "have some respect for other speakers of being and / for god's sake drop all this crap about words, / singularity, and dominion" (50). Not all languages are equally successful adaptations, however. The language that "nature assigned to chicken-birds" was

as competition goes, not sufficient to protect
them from us: our systems now

change their genes, their forms and procedures,
house them up in all-life houses, trick their

egg laying with artificial days and nights: (51-52).

In this context of genetic and reproductive exploitation, the assertion that "whole languages, like species, can / disappear" (51) is an ominous allusion to the threat of extinction.

At times, Ammons seems to suggest that poetry has a role to play in the genetic defense of the species. In "Recoveries," he seeks a defense against "genetic material's . . . extravagant loss along the // edging peripheries of accident, / poor formation, mischance." He finds this defense in the "flares of form, modes of slim / continuance, mounting / lofts, mingling seed" which provide

. . . the tiny whining,
insisting energy . . . that

sings stuff back together,
resilient threads, bends, promoting
shape through time: (SV 118-19).

While the shapes described here--"modes of slim / continuance" and "resilient threads, bends"--could be the helices of DNA strands, they could also be poetic forms and lines of verse. The emphasis on sound--the whining and singing--supports a reading of this poem as a link between poetry and genetics. In a 1973 interview, Ammons described his poetry as "the energy needed to move through life" (51). In a 1983 essay, he calls his poems "systems nature (or energy) is clearly, truly, abundantly released through" ("Inside" 1).

Ammons is not alone in this textualizing of genetics. Donna Haraway, a scientist and cultural theorist, writes: "Biology is about recognition and misrecognition, coding errors, the body's reading practices (for example, frameshift mutations), and billion-dollar projects to sequence the human genome to be published and stored in a national genetic 'library.' . . . The biomedical-biotechnical body is a semiotic system, a complex

meaning-producing field . . . "(Simians 211). There are even disputes within the biomedical industry over the copyrighting of DNA sequences (Ross 242) which echo the ongoing "fair use" disputes of literary copyright law.⁸³

The notion of poetic involvement in genetic transmission across generations raises the issue of poetic transmission across generations, that is, the issue of canonicity. Ammons's work features the repeated trope of the literary canon as a product of reproduction and genetic evolution subject to natural selection. If poetry partakes of the threats of extinction facing the extrapoetic world, entrance into the canon becomes not only a traditional route to literary immortality, but a necessity for survival. Tape for the Turn of the Year notes that "poetry has / one subject, impermanence, / which it presents / with as much permanence as / possible" (145). Ammons directly addresses the anxious metaphors of literary immortality as a response to the threat of extinction in "Hibernaculum": "I keep forgetting this // translation from fleshbody to wordbody is leaving my / flesh behind" (CP 354-55). Later in the poem, he repeats this wistful confusion of canonical and personal survival: "I keep thinking these words / translate me into another body less affected by / the weather and time's clicking subtractions" (CP 363).

⁸³ Feminist philosopher Judith Roof has drawn parallels between copyright law and statutes governing reproductive rights. Her argument, that authorship and paternity are both upheld by patriarchal concepts of property, makes another connection between genetics and poetics.

In Tape for the Turn of the Year, Ammons compares canonical influence to bacterial reproduction. He writes that bacteria multiply both asexually to preserve "changeless transmission" and sexually to test "conditions / with mutant : possibilities:"

we must keep the
tradition &
modify it
so we stay resilient to
change:
too traditional is loss of
change: too changing is
loss of meaning & memory:" (110-111)

The typification of literary influence as sexual is in keeping with the sexual metaphors for poetry that run through Tape for the Turn of the Year. Ammons's most explicit reproductive canon is found in Sphere:

in the generations and becomings of our minds, anthologies,
good sayings are genes, the images, poems, stories
chromosomes and the interminglings of these furnish beginnings

within continuities, continuities within trials, mischances,
fortunate forwardings: gene pool, word hoard: the critic
samples the new thing, he turns it over in his consideration,
.....

if the new thing finds no attachment, if energy, cementing,
 does not flow back and forth between it and the anthology,

 it dies, withered away from the configuration of the people:
 but if it lives, critic and teacher show it to the
 young, unfold its meaning, fix its roots and extend its reach: (17).

This agricultural image of pedagogy is echoed with a more sexual emphasis in "Summer Session" when Ammons refers to his students as "the 18-year-old / seedbeds & the / 19-year-old fertilizers" for whom his knowledge will be an "insemination" (CP 260).

There are other "natural" canons in Ammons's work. In "Essay on Poetics," Ammons traces a range of poetic quality from the "minor" lyric of mountainous "snowline melt" trickling down to the "genius" of the ocean. Ammons emphasizes the influential power of this canon, which allows it to reproduce by saying itself "over and / over": "the greatest poetry, is the sea, settled, contained before the first / current stirs but implying in its every motion adjustments / throughout the measure: one recognizes an ocean even from a dune . . ." (CP 309). The allusion to recognizing an ocean from a dune calls to mind Ammons's own "Corsons Inlet" and implicates his own work in "the greatest poetry."

In his dissertation on Ammons, Philip Fried notes that Ammons's canonical scheme in *Sphere* gives to the literary critic a role equivalent to the role of natural selection in evolution (46).⁸⁴ To give critics and reviewers such a powerful and

⁸⁴ Fried ultimately finds Ammons's unsophisticated "in his application of biological

determining role in one's work is perhaps, for a poet at least, only to grant them what they already have. Ammons worries over his literary reputation in many of his poems. In a few places, Ammons seems to find Gary Snyder a particular rival. In Sphere, Ammons calls philosophical pondering "a good task for those so minded who would not prefer to be out regarding waves: bugus ecstaticus: hocus focus" (21). In "Summer Place," the traffic jams are blamed on "every / other Philadelphian coming down to regard the waves" (181).⁸⁵ Fried suggests that the many references to peripheral spaces in Ammons's work reflect Ammons's own sense of literary peripherality (1).

In the lengthy and uncollected poem "Summer Place," Ammons overtly complains about his critical reception and indulges a bitter fantasy of being excluded from a banquet and becoming "a nature poet" who enjoys "a luminous starvation." Here, in the context of critical reception and poetic fame, Ammons's sexual scenarios emphasize abusive power and ridicule, in stark contrast to his sexual pleasure in poetic composition elsewhere:

I have this theory about when people want you to assume
the position of maximum receptivity or penitence they
don't tell you to sit down but to get down on your knees:

concepts to social phenomena" like canon-building (47).

⁸⁵ Snyder is not mentioned by name, however, in the catalogue of poets in "Summer Place." It is possible that my impression is the result of my own dissertation anxiety and resultant fixations, rather than any fixation of Ammons's.

that, in relation to the person who just told you to
get down on your knees, leaves you looking into the
genital area, a dark, winding, if absorbing, subject:

in that position you can receive the rod of knowledge
head-on, or if you don't receive it, you can get the
image what you could receive if you don't do right: (177)

"Summer Place" shares the insecure concern with phallic dimensions we saw in The Snow Poems: "a review came today . . . / that said I fall far short of Stevens: I // guess that means you couldn't hang your hat on mine" (208). Ammons mournfully contrasts the huge audience for Independence Day fireworks with poetry's relatively small audience. His comparison of fireworks and poetry ("firewords") underlines the survival value Ammons places on poetry: "the / transitoriness of it all, worse than day lilies, calls / out the hunger of immediate appreciation or loss of // life" (183).

In Garbage, Ammons suggests that the canon, like the trashfill, is overflowing with waste and running out of room for additional poets like himself. He searches the library catalog for "Garbage Disposal"

and the screen came blank--nothing! all those
titles, row on row, of western goodies, mostly

worse than junk, but not a word on Disposal: I
should have looked, I suppose, under Waste Disposal

but, who cares, I already got the point: I
 know garbage is being "disposed" of--but what

I wanted I had gotten, a clear space and pure
 freedom to dump whatever, and this means most

of the catalog must go, so much that what is
 left will need no computer to be kept track of: (49)

Later in the poem, poetry itself becomes a kind of hazardous waste. The poem "becomes a relic sometimes only generations or / sets of countrywide generations can degrade" (109). In this context, the volume's title becomes a sardonic reference to a polluted literary landscape.

Ammons's emphasis in the above lines on issues of canonization resonates with the critical theories of Harold Bloom. Bloom has long been a critical supporter of Ammons. In finding Ammons's environmentalism "his largest flaw," Bloom's reading of Ammons obviously contradicts mine. Bloom insists that Ammons is not a poet of nature, and that he is instead anti-nature, an inheritor of an Emersonian alienation from the material world. Bloom goes so far as to identify Ammons as "the Poet that Emerson prophesied as necessary for America" ("New" 36). Bloom's reading of Ammons as

alienated from nature seems based in Ammons's analytical style; Bloom tends to conflate analysis with alienation and thereby reaches his anti-nature conclusion.⁸⁶

Bloom's most famous theory is set forth in The Anxiety of Influence, in which he conflates the making of a poetic career with the Oedipal conflict. According to Bloom, poets have a literary psychology in which they are sons of earlier, stronger poets, whom they must destructively and constructively misread in order to have their own relationship with a female Muse: "But what is the Primal Scene, for a poet as *poet*? It is his Poetic Father's coitus with the Muse. There he was begotten? No--there they failed to beget him. He must be self-begotten, he must engender himself upon the Muse his mother" (37). We have seen Ammons's emphasis on poetry as coitus throughout this chapter. Ammons's phallic imagery is a classic example of the issues raised by self-proclaimed Bloomians Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar: "Is a pen a metaphorical penis?" (3). Bloom argues that poets suffer from an "anxiety of influence," the "fear that no proper work remains for him to perform" (Anxiety 148). According to this theory, all of the good poems have already been written, and the aspiring poet can only emulate and imitate his poetic father. This aspect of Bloom's thought is addressed in Garbage. When Ammons deletes the books of poetry from the library catalog, proclaiming them so much garbage, he conquers the anxiety of influence by clearing a space for his own work.

⁸⁶ For Bloom's readings of Ammons, see his "A. R. Ammons: The Breaking of the Vessels," "Dark and Radiant Peripheries: Mark Strand and A. R. Ammons," the introduction to a collection of Ammons criticism, The Ringers in the Tower, and "The New Transcendentalism: The Visionary Strain in Merwin, Ashbery, and Ammons."

What has happened here is that the problem of environmental degradation has been metaphorically translated into the literary sphere. Ammons's concerns about his literary reputation are analogized as an overpopulated world/canon gasping under towering poetic trashheaps that must be emptied to make room for his garbage/poem. Bloom's more recent work endorses such a reading of Ammons. In The Western Canon, Bloom considers overpopulation "the authentic context for canonical anxieties" (15) and calls the canon "a kind of survivor's list" (38). Even Bloomian revisionists bring issues of survival to their readings of poetry. In an article criticizing Bloom's sexism, Annette Kolodny argues that women poets suffer not from an anxiety of influence but from "the influence of anxiety" which is the fear that their works "will be lost or . . . go unheeded" ("Influence" 125). Although Kolodny is aligned with Bloom in confining herself to issues of literary survival, this dissertation shows that such literary concerns are the textual face of anxiety about human survival in a damaged environment. Kolodny's conclusion--that women poets survive by declaring their "independence of male poetry and masculinist poetic theory"--is the literary equivalent of ecofeminist philosophy ("Influence" 136).

Ammons's literary relationship with Bloom has been particularly close. He has dedicated poems to Bloom, and Bloom was on the National Book Award committee when Ammons won the award in 1973. In an interview with David Grossvogel, Ammons responds to a question about Bloom's theories by denying that he feels the anxiety of influence. However, he goes on to say that he does feel an anxiety about "hierarchy," and gives the shifting literary canon as an example of hierarchy. Ammons argues that

hierarchy is instinctual ("deriving from something situated somewhere down all of our spines, and racial experience") and being cast out of the hierarchy is the cause of anxiety. He concludes that his own hierarchical anxiety has lessened "because my work has been more accepted" (50). Bloom played a major role in this acceptance, and Ammons's arguments are in many ways a restatement of Bloom's theories.⁸⁷

More than any of the other poets discussed here, Ammons addresses environmental reproductive anxiety in terms of the poetic enterprise. Given the timeless poetic trope of poems conflated with offspring, Ammons's anxiety about his poetic legacy or lack thereof should be read in conjunction with the sexual and reproductive issues raised in his poetry. In a 1994 essay, Ammons insists that "[v]erbal actions imitate human actions." He appeals to poetry as a source of extrapoetic meaning: "Value is represented in poems. Poems exemplify ways to behave" ("Poetry" 14). His poems, with their insistent sexualized concerns about canonicity, suggest that our behaviors should ensure our continuance as readers and as a species.

⁸⁷ Bloom's impact on Ammons's poetic reputation has been so great that his work tends, ironically, to cause a critical anxiety of influence. As early as 1978, Janet DeRosa found that "Bloom's ideas overshadow subsequent readings" of Ammons (3). Willard Spiegelman sarcastically remarks, "If Ammons had not existed . . . Harold Bloom would have had to invent him" (118). There are hearsay rumors that in recent years Ammons has questioned whether Bloom's advocacy has not been more curse than boon which, if true, are testimony to the anxiety of poetic ambition, if nothing else.

Chapter Six: Dirty Pictures, Dirty Places: Environmentalism and Pornography⁸⁸

The preceding chapters of this dissertation perceive in environmentalism an apocalyptic reproductive anxiety: as the world around us grows more polluted and more toxic, the survival of the human species begins to be at risk. Sharing this anxiety, the works of environmental writers like Mary Oliver, Linda Hogan, Gary Snyder, and A. R. Ammons are full of tense references to sexual, literary, and cultural reproduction. This chapter points to some interconnections between these various poetic reproductive anxieties and contemporary cultural reproductive anxiety as displayed in debates over pornography and censorship. An examination of the relationships between literary environmentalism and the anti-pornography crusade provides an overview of the interactions of environmentalism, gender issues, and religion that are treated more specifically in the preceding chapters.

The anxious energy of environmental poetry produces a passionate and politically committed literary genre. That very passion and commitment, however, presumes that readers are moved to action in the world by their exposure to environmental poetry. Unmoved by Auden's warnings that poetry makes nothing happen, environmental poetry sees itself as politicizing and consciousness-raising. According to this logic, if enough of Gary Snyder's books are sold and read fewer people will litter roadsides or vote in favor of nuclear power. The logic of this presumption parallels that of anti-pornography activists like Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin. MacKinnon and Dworkin,

⁸⁸ A version of this chapter was presented at the Dirt Conference sponsored by the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies at Harvard University on March 16, 1996.

among others, work to ban pornography in the belief that pornographic texts cause actual rapes. They see pornographic literary texts and representations as the how-to manuals of sexism and patriarchy.

Pornography is a troubled issue within environmentalism. Some ecofeminists equate pornography with pollution and see both as the product of patriarchal disregard for both women and Mother Earth. Some environmentalists have spoken of stylized, exquisite nature photography and films as a kind of "ecoporn" because such works objectify nature for human aesthetic pleasure. The disputes and debates about gender found in environmental poetry are replayed in contemporary debates about pornography. Both discourses focus on the overlapping of sexual and textual reproduction, and both often argue from ultimately religious perspectives. Anthropologist Mary Douglas finds that pollution taboos function anthropologically as a method of "marshalling moral disapproval" (133), particularly "when moral rules are obscure or contradictory" (143). Few rules are more contradictory in our society than those governing gender and sexuality. From this perspective, what gender theorist Judith Butler calls the "sorry discursive alliance" (108) of feminists and sexist right-wing fundamentalists makes anthropological sense.

The idea that literature changes readers' attitudes and lives is an ancient one; a belief in some textual impact is the very basis of communication. Theories of literature, however, have generally held that what is communicated in literary texts is an aesthetic appreciation of literature as art. If any actual "message" is intended by a text, the theme is said to reflect a "universal human experience," contemplation of which will allow

readers to better appreciate the aesthetic component of life itself. Literature which displays too specific a message has often been categorized as "political literature," which by relegating aesthetic concerns to political ones thereby becomes less literary. Leaving aside for the moment the question of how aesthetics themselves are political just like everything else, it is important to note that both primarily aesthetic literature and primarily political literature confine their expectations of extratextual impact to the psychological sphere of changing readers' minds. In contrast, many environmental writers believe they are transmitting messages from Nature itself in a kind of automatic writing which will communicate to readers at some primal genetic level that transcends mere psychology or thoughtful consideration. Like fundamentalists who hear the Bible as the voice of God, the readers of environmental writing will be inspired by Nature itself, which calls to what is natural within the readers and thereby converts them to proper living. When Gary Snyder claims that he is inspired by the Earth Mother or by biomass, or like Linda Hogan incorporates religious ritual into his work, or when Mary Oliver claims that her poetry escapes her personal ego and personal psychology, they are claiming a higher authority and a wider range of action for their work. The consistent theme found in all three poets, that humans are interrelated holistically with nature, provides a context in which this transhuman voice of nature may be heard. Likewise, when anti-pornography activists displace the cause of rape from individual assailants to textual representations, they are implying an inescapable natural mechanism of rape that runs deeper than psychology or cognition. All of these approaches define human beings in immutably essential ways. Such essential definitions threaten not only the possibilities

for reasoned discourse about important social problems but also the possibilities for social equality insofar as they deny individual difference and make possible an immutable hierarchy to accompany their immutable definitions.

What makes the problem of essentialism so intractable is that the anti-essentialist argument is also flawed. In their discussions of motives, essentialists brandish immutable essences and anti-essentialists flourish mediated social constructions but ultimately both schools of thought posit a direct and immediate connection between belief and action. In their debate about the source of belief, neither essentialists nor anti-essentialists question the mechanism whereby belief is translated into action and this conundrum underlies the entire debate. Whether one is an acolyte of Mary Daly or of Jacques Derrida is important not so much because contestors seek to locate which theorist has the truer view, but because one's adherence to either theory is assumed to predicate one's actions in the world. This problematic relationship between belief and actions in the world has obvious significance in many fields, but is especially foregrounded in environmentalism due to environmentalism's complex matrix of spirituality and activism.⁸⁹

One literary critic who explicitly promotes a non-psychological, or real, relationship between poetry and the physical environment is William Klink. Klink names the relationship between text and world "transtextuality," a term which "denotes

⁸⁹ Another relevant arena for this debate is within the societal conflict over abortion, which is also another site of reproductive anxiety. Witness, for example, the general public dissatisfaction with the popular political position of personal opposition to abortion (belief) combined with a public commitment to upholding the legal status of *Roe v. Wade* (action).

meaning-effects that transfer from the text to its ensuing context, and back again to the text." In an article on William Carlos Williams's Paterson, Klink finds transtextuality to be analogous to the concept of performative speech acts, utterances which are also actions ("Paterson" 96). Klink's transtextual reading of Ammons's "Corsons Inlet" compares details of the poem with the geographical reality of Corson's Inlet in New Jersey. In 1990, the date of Klink's article, the New Jersey Department of Parks and Forestry was considering producing a brochure about Corson's Inlet which would include information about Ammons's poem. Klink concludes that "while Ammons's efforts and those of his critics have been ineffectual agents on the site of Corson's Inlet until now, the poem will in the future add to the myth of this site and change the site forever . . ." ("Site" 228). Klink admits that Ammons, when asked, found this transtextual method "useless" ("Site" 227). It is suggestive, however, to learn that Ammons has dropped the possessive apostrophe of Corson's Inlet in the title of his poem. This punctuational detail, albeit minor, points to issues of ownership, repossession, and appropriation that are central to the discourses of environmentalism and pornography. Klink's theories are noteworthy in that they elide consideration of readers' receptions of poems in order to focus exclusively on the tangible results of those perceptions. In this way, Klink's work parallels the strain of environmental thought common to groups like Earth First! which would prefer to elide consideration of human beings in order to focus on tangible geographical environments.

Transtextuality seems to me to be a specific and strong version of the more general concept of influence. What both environmentalists and antipornography activists are primarily concerned with is the influence of various texts on human action in the

world as distinct from personal and individual reader-responses. This concern is part of a larger contemporary movement toward establishing culpable causality for various social problems. Other examples of this trend may be seen in the censorship of rock music lyrics and in alcohol and drug laws of dubious constitutionality. (I am thinking here of laws against drunk driving that hold hosts and bartenders responsible for subsequent accidents of guests and customers, or of the prosecution of rock and rap groups for their supposed inspiration of various crimes.)⁹⁰ This societal concern with influence should be distinguished from academic concepts of literary influence, which concern intertextuality rather than extra- or transtextuality.

While Klink's transtextual theory is far from influential in environmental studies, it does bear a certain similarity to Andrea Dworkin's theory of the extratextual effects of pornography. Dworkin believes that each viewing of a pornographic image is an act of rape: "The photographs . . . document a rape, a rape first enacted when the women were set up and used; a rape repeated each time the viewer consumes the photograph" (137). Dworkin's use of "rape" is not metaphorical. In its literality, her conflation of image consumption with actual physical violation is akin to Klink's conflation of textual

⁹⁰ Bands prosecuted for obscenity include the Dead Kennedys and 2 Live Crew. The heavy metal group Judas Priest was prosecuted for causing suicides through the use of subliminal messages in their albums. All the musical groups were eventually acquitted. See Kennedy for an examination of the Dead Kennedys trial. The movement to censor rock music is organized chiefly by a lobbying group called Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC). A primary PMRC spokesperson is Tipper Gore, wife of current vice-president and visible environmentalist Al Gore. Like those feminists who align themselves with right-wing factions in mutual opposition to pornography, some African-American civil rights activists have joined forces with right-wing factions in mutual opposition to the explicit genre of gangsta rap, on which see Saunders.

consumption and geographical enrichment. Similarly, Catharine MacKinnon makes no distinction between filmed and live events: "In terms of what the men are doing sexually, an audience watching a gang rape in a movie is no different from an audience watching a gang rape that is reenacting a gang rape from a movie, or an audience watching any gang rape" (28). As far as MacKinnon is concerned, watching a movie and committing rape are identical actions. This particular argument literalizes metaphorical rape using the same literary mechanism we saw in the environmental literalized metaphors of Snyder and Oliver. It is in such literalized metaphors that essentialism is most clearly at work.

MacKinnon was even more extreme when in 1993 she cried rape over a negative book review. MacKinnon's book, Only Words, details the theory behind the anti-pornography legislation she and Dworkin drafted and lobbied for in the 1980s. Book reviewer Carlin Romano, writing in the Nation, unkindly mused about raping MacKinnon in order to demonstrate "the difference between being raped and being exposed to pornography," a distinction he finds lacking in her book. MacKinnon found his review itself to be a rape: "He had me where he wanted me. He wants me as a violated woman with her legs spread. He needed me there before he could address my work" (qtd. in Lacayo). A far kinder review of MacKinnon's work by critic Frances Ferguson focuses precisely on the extratextual impact of pornography: "What MacKinnon most importantly emphasizes about representations is . . . their transitivity. This is the point at stake when she and Dworkin describe pornography not as a description of sex but as sex, or speak of it not as a depiction of an idea of sex but as a product that can be made, sold, bought, and used to produce at least the action of masturbation" (682).

While anti-pornography and environmentalist discourses share a concern with extratextual effects, they also often share a religious perspective. Much of the feminist furor over MacKinnon's and Dworkin's activism is based on their single-issue alliances with anti-feminist right-wing religious groups. We have seen that a religious perspective informs much environmental writing. Mary Oliver's Christic predators and animal madonnas are one example; another is Gary Snyder's Buddhist perspective. Like environmental writing, much religious writing also seeks to affect extratextual actions, particularly those religious writings that aim to proselytize. Susan Sontag draws a parallel between pornographic and religious writings based on this extratextual effect: "Pornography . . . aims to 'excite' in the same way that books which render an extreme form of religious experience aim to 'convert'" (48). In Linda Hogan's novel Mean Spirit, the Gospel of medicine man Michael Horse is intended specifically to convert Euro-Americans to an environmental spirituality. In his influential article on environmental poetry, "A Secular Pilgrimage," Wendell Berry argues that the "natural effect of such poetry is the religious one of humility and awe" (410).

The role of religion, and especially the role of Christianity, has been a topic of much debate in environmental studies. Many environmental theorists, notably Lynn White, see Christianity as a source of environmentally-damaging attitudes and beliefs. White calls Christianity "the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen": "By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects" (86). White sees environmental problems as at root religious ones requiring religious solutions. He praises the "beatniks and

hippies" for their "sound instinct in their affinity for Zen Buddhism and Hinduism" (91). Much of Gary Snyder's spiritual writing exemplifies White's suggested remedy. Feminist theorist Susan Griffin condemns both Christianity and pornography as ecologically destructive discourses since neither finds a divine immanence in the material world (71-72). Griffin suggests that the plot of much violent pornography reenacts Christ's martyrdom insofar as it presents "usually a woman, sometimes a man, often a child, . . . abducted by force, verbally abused, beaten, bound hand and foot and gagged, often tortured, often hung, his or her body suspended, wounded, and then murdered" (46).

Other critics are less willing to condemn Christianity as a monolithic cause of environmental degradation, especially since Christianity encompasses many distinct perspectives. Even White spared a kind word for St. Francis of Assisi (91). David Williams examines the role of the wilderness as a site of spiritual regeneration in Puritan theology. According to Williams's interpretation of Puritan typology, the wilderness is "the place where the soul becomes emptied of the lies of the everyday world and is able to come as close to the raw truth as possible" (121). Williams finds this regenerative conception of wilderness still operative in American culture. Anthropologist Mary Douglas notes the Judeo-Christian tradition sees both agricultural and human fertility guaranteed through a human covenant with God (51).

Part of the environmental critique of Judeo-Christian concepts is based on the influence of the story of Genesis. The Genesis story is environmentally damaging on several counts. In the first place, it portrays the ecologically harmonious Garden of Eden as irrevocably lost and irretrievable since humankind has been cast out into this imperfect

world by God Himself. This perspective can define environmental dangers as part of an inevitable worldly imperfection and thereby undermine environmental activism.

Furthermore, Genesis explicitly places humans in "dominion" over the earth and its inhabitants, a passage which serves as Biblical justification for environmentally exploitative actions in some situations. It is worth noting that Genesis also blames Eve for the Fall, thereby associating women with sin, and places women under the dominion of men. Such misogynist attitudes inform both pornography and its right-wing opposition. Linda Hogan directly critiques the Judeo-Christian concepts of Genesis, including the idea of the Fall and the dominion of humans over animals, in poems like "The Fallen."

Perhaps more dangerous to the environment than the story of Genesis is the Christian concept of apocalypse, the inevitable movement towards the end of the time and the end of the world. Fundamentalist Christianity's literal interpretations of Biblical apocalypse render the question of our environmental future moot. There is little point in attempting to preserve a world fated for destruction. Reverend Jerry Falwell articulates this fundamentalist viewpoint: "New heavens and new Earth are coming . . . Everything is finite, except God. When this earth is depleted, all of its resources are gone, God has a plan B . . . new Heavens, new Earth, the holy city, the eternity with Him, and as a Christian, to me, it makes me sleep well." Catherine Keller argues that Revelations is itself transtextual in its impact on Western attitudes towards the environment: "It is not only that as the prophecies of Revelation seem to approach realization, we have reason to think they were on target; rather, this is a formative text deeply enough inscribed in

Western consciousness to have found the means of its self-fulfillment" (254). Theorist James Applewhite finds "theological" thought to be at the bottom of "the self-contradictions of Western consciousness--which threatens all it has built with destruction." He cites as an example the theological codenames of the military-industrial complex, noting that during World War II the bombing of Dresden was codenamed Operation Thunderclap (15-16). Mary Daly makes much the same argument from a radical feminist perspective, and notes the atomic bomb test in 1945 codenamed Trinity (97). Environmentalism shares with much religious fundamentalism an apocalyptic vision of the end of the world.

In both strains of thought we are urged to mend our ways while there is still time. Social ecologist Andrew Ross compares the ethical aesthetics of environmentalists and religious fundamentalists. He argues that conservation practices urged by environmentalists, like recycling and reducing material consumption, are akin to the Judeo-Christian values of "scarcity, voluntary poverty, and asceticism." Ross finds "a fierce evangelical tendency among environmentalists to cast us all as ecological sinners in a fallen world" and links this tendency to various other contemporary cultural prohibitions which urge us to "just say no" (16-17). The contemporary debates about pornography and other sexually explicit materials reflect what theorists like Richard Dellamora and Lee Quinby see as a sexual apocalypse.

One does well to bear in mind that Revelations is about revelations, about an unveiling that can be seen operating in the stripping and laying bare of bodies in pornography. The archetypal link between sexuality and death is accentuated in

pornography. While this is obvious in violent pornography which explicitly describes or represents death, less violent and more mainstream pornography also exploits this archetypal link. Feminist theorist Rosalind Coward describes "the death effect of photography," which she finds exacerbating the impact of pornography on the psyche. According to Coward, all photography, in its representation of a subject that must once have been present but is now absent but for the presence of the photograph, reminds the viewer of the absence of the represented. Photography, therefore, also reminds the viewer of death. Coward finds that photographic pornography evokes death through this photographic death effect. In addition, she argues that the semiotic coding of representations of female bodies conflates sexual pleasure with death: "Women's pleasure is represented as simultaneously languid and turbulent, the combination of orgasm and passionate death. . . . [W]omen are shown in passionate submission, their posture evoking at best romantic deaths, at worst sexual murders" (319-20). One is here reminded of Edgar Allan Poe's remark in "The Philosophy of Composition" that "the death . . . of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world" (1324).

Like the murderous pornography that exists alongside the sexualized representations of women in fashion magazines, we are, thanks to the environmental movement, exposed to photographs of devastated ecosystems in media coverage of environmental disasters alongside the ubiquitous "unspoiled nature" images of film documentaries and calendars. This connection is explored by environmentalist José Knighton, who considers landscape photography pornographic. He argues that landscape photography employs the same photographic methods as pornography in manipulating

images to produce a scenic setting of intimacy through the use of special lenses, provocative lighting, and other technical effects. Knighton further argues that pornography and landscape photography share the same aesthetic goal: "to appeal to, even seduce, the beholder with an image . . . amplified into a commodity by technique. Neutral reality is objectified to evoke a subjective response for commercial gain, to sell calendars and magazine subscriptions or to connive contributions" (77-78). Like the women who are raped by pornographically inspired men, landscapes too are physically damaged by their photographic representation, since the increased tourism inspired by the photos inevitably damages the toured ecosystems.

Most interesting about Knighton's article, however, is his emphasis on the distinction between the experience of the real landscape and the photographed landscape. He confesses his "resentment" of those who will "re-experience" the landscape "warm and comfortable in an easy chair, leafing through a magazine or glancing at a calendar." By contrast, his actual viewing of the landscape on a photographic assignment is an experience he "struggled for, rose before a frozen dawn for, thawed an ice-filled coffeepot for, slept through a too-long December night for. I want to hoard the immeasurable, transitory glory . . . share[d] with no other visible humans" (76). Knighton's praise for the integrity of "being there" contradicts his condemnation of ecotourism, which after all aims for precisely this direct experience of natural landscapes. His emphasis on suffering, sacrifice, and exclusivity suggest that what he is opposing to the pornographic aesthetic is the rhetoric of romantic or even courtly love.

Feminist critic Chaia Heller argues that contemporary representations of "Mother Nature" draw on idealizing romantic metaphors: "Once again, the romantic themes of love through idealization, protection, and constraint pervade--this time in the form of ecological 'love poetry'. . . . 'Mother Earth' and 'Mother Gaia' reflect an idea of nature as the pure, ideal, all-giving woman for whom every ecologically minded knight should willingly risk his life" (223). Heller finds romantic propaganda nostalgic for culturally and politically conservative "family values" including a romanticized notion of motherhood. She predicts: "The nineties environmental campaign will attempt to conflate the debauchery of right-wing capitalism with the political struggles of the left as the cause of ecocide. The cause of environmental destruction will quite possibly be portrayed as a breakdown of 'simple' Christian family life, and the breakdown of romance and chivalry between the sexes" (237). Better than halfway through the nineties, Heller has proven prescient indeed.

Many anti-pornography, ecofeminist, and environmental activists share an essentialist view of gender and a brand of moral reasoning based on that essentialism.⁹¹ Both the rhetoric of "family values" and the rhetoric of ecofeminism idealize women as closer to life and whatever is lifegiving. Political and social conservatism promote the image of the homemaking mother as the best and most natural role for women. All of this rhetoric conflates the multiple definitions of nature--as legitimating authority, as reality, as aesthetic ideal, as eternal truth, as physical world--in support of social values

⁹¹ While I am focusing here on this essentialism and the commonalities it creates between disparate movements, it is important to note that not all thought in these fields is essentialist.

that are to a large degree oppressive to women.⁹² Ecofeminist Vandana Shiva supports the same oppressive values when she says: "Why is it that women sense destruction faster and are more persevering in the struggles against destruction? Why do they carry on when everyone else is cynical and hopeless? The reason is that women have a distinctive perception of what life is, a sense of what is really vital, which colours their view of what is at stake in the world" (9). Mary Daly summed up the ecofeminist position in one word in the title of her book Gyn/Ecology. The cultural associations of women with both nature and the home serve to support the special role of women in ecofeminism and its environmental insight that the natural world is home to humans.

Nor do men fare much better, since these philosophies also essentialize male gender roles. To ecofeminists, all men are, at least potentially, rapists and polluters--if indeed a distinction is made between raping and polluting. Susan Griffin considers the motif of bestiality in some pornography to be an exploitive male attack upon a natural spiritual closeness between women and animals (25). Even ecofeminist denials of misandry are unconvincing:

Men--our brothers, fathers, lovers, and friends--need not be the enemy.

Though they have been groomed since early childhood to become the enactors of patriarchy, they began life in the arms of women and, as little boys, they undoubtedly loved the freedom of the outdoors, were thrilled at the sight of a nest of baby birds, for instance, or ecstatic with fresh-fallen snow. It breaks many a young boy's heart to find out that the slingshot he

⁹² For good discussions of different definitions of nature, see Evernden and Lovejoy.

so innocently plays with actually kills the little bird. Male human beings have the capacity to have compassion for life, but they will have to struggle long and hard to overcome their own upbringing (Plant 2-3).

Asserting that men "have the capacity to have compassion" is akin to asserting that women do indeed have souls, but unfortunately both assertions have been the topic of serious debate. Anti-essentialist ecofeminist Val Plumwood notes that since Darwinism, "the ancient traditions connecting men with culture and women with nature are overlain by some more recent and conflicting ones in which unchangeable 'male' essence ('virility') is connected to a nature no longer viewed as reproductive and providing but as 'wild,' as violent, competitive and sexual" ("Feminism" 8). Plumwood connects this reversal of gender associations with a Victorian "idealization of female nature and the way in which sexuality is increasingly perceived as an arena for control and domination" ("Feminism" 13). It is perhaps worth noting that Plumwood here bifurcates reproduction and sexuality and assigns them to opposite sides of a gender polarity. Something of the same logic may be at work in Oliver's depictions of parthenogenetic mothers who reproduce without having sex. In using these images, Oliver omits qualities culturally associated with maleness from her poems. This omission boosts the appeal of her work to ecofeminism, despite Oliver's rejection of any such labelling.

An anti-male bias is also part of the feminist anti-pornography movement. Most noteworthy about Catharine MacKinnon's anti-pornography writings is that they offer no sexual role to men besides that of rapist. She says that men are "impelled" by pornography to assault women (15). MacKinnon describes the effects of pornography as

somehow bypassing the conscious mind and reaching directly into the natural unconscious of the physical body: "It is not so much that the sexual terms [of pornography] reference a reality as that they reaccess and restimulate body memory of it for both aggressor and victim. The aggressor gets an erection; the victim screams and struggles and bleeds and blisters . . ." (58-59). MacKinnon consistently elides any description of how these ominous erections result in rapes. Apparently it just naturally follows. Neither MacKinnon nor Dworkin offer any vision of consensual heterosexual sex.⁹³ In their view, erections preclude happy endings. Gender theorist Judith Butler notes that if pornography did indeed have the unmediated power to assault with which MacKinnon and Dworkin credit it, neither woman would have been able to write about it: "the muted, passive, and injured stance of the woman viewer would effectively preclude a critical analysis of its structure and place within the field of social power" (113).⁹⁴

We have already seen that MacKinnon makes no distinction between participatory reality and the viewing of filmed events. In the passage cited above, she displaces the notion of some legally actionable reality onto a location of reality in bodily sensation, thereby conflating subjective and objective responses. This conflation of subjective and objective is akin to the poetic presentation of the Voice of Nature, which

⁹³ It is perhaps worth noting here that the antipornography argument does not, by and large, concern itself with homosexually oriented pornography. The antiporn argument's reliance on essentialist definitions of gender precludes much discussion of "queer sexualities." In terms of real-actions-in-the-world however, gay and lesbian materials often have been the first publications prosecuted under antipornography laws.

⁹⁴ In the acknowledgements of her book, Andrea Dworkin states that studying pornography caused her "great personal anguish" (225).

similarly originates from some pre- or un- or sub-conscious level of the mind.

MacKinnon's description of the stigmata-bearing victim is a literalized metaphor of the kind associated with Snyder's poems of physical paternity. The MacKinnon/Dworkin theory of pornography as rape partakes of the same type of primal and essentialized psychology that informs much environmentalism. Critic Linda Vance finds this psychology at work in the environmental use of the Mother Earth image, which she condemns as an antifeminist warning about rape: "[E]veryone knows that you shouldn't rape your mother. Perhaps this image works on man, as clumsy crosses are thought to work against the undead." Vance also critiques the literalized metaphor of pollution as the rape of Mother Earth. She calls this literalization the "practical level," on which the Mother Earth image supposedly warns us that "only mothers, only women who nurture and provide, deserve to be safe from rape" (131). In these terms, Vance sees the Mother Earth image as a threatening enforcement of essentialist definitions of femininity.

The unremitting focus on the maternal common to ecofeminism, environmentalism, and the anti-pornography movement has implications for other social issues. One might recall here the madonna figures we have seen in our poets: Oliver's animal madonnas, Hogan's female ancestors, and Snyder's confections of goddess, wife, mother, and muse. Perhaps predictably, the attitudes we have been examining concerning pornography are also at work in environmentalist debates about abortion. Feminist Alice Echols finds that "the anti-pornography crusade functions as the feminist equivalent of the anti-abortion movement--reinforcing and validating women's traditional

sexual conservatism and manipulating women's sense of themselves as the culture's victims and its moral guardians" (455).

In the context of the reproductive anxiety posited throughout this dissertation, abortion is the frightening negation of successful reproduction. In the practice of abortion, it is not Nature that is breaking down and denying fertility but the individual woman who has the abortion. She thereby becomes unnatural, both in terms of subverting the natural processes of reproduction and in terms of moral pollution as evidenced by social disapproval if not outright condemnation. Both environmentalists and pro-life groups have recognized the similarities of their respective discourses. Environmentalist Harold Fromm calls some forms of environmentalism "cosmic-prolifeism" (43). Reverend Jerry Falwell chides environmentalists for what he, at least partially correctly, sees as an inconsistency in their arguments: "I'd give more credence to some of the environmentalists who are trying to save the snail darter and the spotted owl . . . if I could find them once in a while speaking out on behalf of unborn children." Pro-life feminist Gail Grenier Sweet includes abortion in a list of problems "which harden our hearts and destroy our planet" (qtd. in Hentoff 139). Cultural theorist Donna Haraway incisively parallels the issues of representation required in speaking for nature and for the unborn: "Who speaks for the jaguar? Who speaks for the fetus? Both questions rely on a political semiotics of representation. Permanently speechless, forever requiring the services of a ventriloquist, never forcing a recall vote, in each case the object or ground of representation is the realization of the representative's fondest dream" ("Promises" 131).

Haraway is cynical about even environmental politicians because she finds that the effect of political representation "is to disempower precisely those--in our case, the pregnant woman and the peoples of the forest--who are 'close' to the now-represented 'natural' object" ("Promises" 312). Haraway's postmodernist feminism is determinedly anti-essentialist. She proposes a utopian ideal of the cyborg--a sentient combination of human, animal, and machine--as a solution to gender stereotypes and reproductive anxiety. She sees cyborgs as a model for connection and regeneration without the attendant psychological and political traumas of sex and reproduction (*Simians* 150-81). In Haraway's deliberately playful essay "A Cyborg Manifesto," cyborgs enjoy the communications benefits of computer and industrial technology and the somatic benefits of varied animal physicalities without becoming trapped in human gender dualities or human political warfare.⁹⁵ More mainstream environmentalists reject proposals like Haraway's as frivolous distractions from the important work of saving real human bodies. Critic N. Katherine Hayles suggests that computerized fantasies like Haraway's cyborgs betray "a deep anxiety about whether we can continue to live on this planet" in our fragile human bodies (57). We saw in Ammons's poetry a metaphorical conflation of genetic and computer coding in poems about both biological and literary reproductive anxiety.

The debate over the appropriateness of cyborg imagery and the role of other futuristic technologies reflects a major division within environmental literary studies: the

⁹⁵ For an excellent but sadder treatment of cyborgs as a solution to gender, environmental, and spiritual troubles, see Marge Piercy's speculative fiction *He, She and It*. Piercy specifically acknowledges Haraway's work. Truly interested parties might then read Piercy's earlier ecofeminist SF classic, *Woman on the Edge of Time*.

place of poststructuralist thought. Many environmentalist critics reject poststructuralism because they find its emphasis on textuality slights the actual environment such critics are determined to save. The Hayles essay cited above is included in a recent ecocritical anthology subtitled "Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction." Most of the included responses are negative; many in this collection and elsewhere associate postmodern theory with destructive technologies, including communications technologies. For example, environmental literary critic Karl Kroeber asserts that the critical jargon of much postmodern theory is a reflection of a destructive "Cold War mentality" (40). Ursula LeGuin laments: "The model of modern Western civilization is the virus: the pure bit of information, which turns its environment into endless reproductions of itself. But the word . . . is not information. What is the information value of the word 'fuck'? Of the word 'OM'?" ("Text" 180). LeGuin's rhetorical examples here of words that presumably transcend the merely informational are, significantly, words related to sexuality and spirituality--discourses traditionally based on appeals to an essentialized nature. This debate within environmentalism engages the rhetoric of technological apocalypse which contests alternating visions of technological salvation and technological devastation (Quinby xvi). This apocalyptic debate over technology has been recurrent in American cultural history since at least Henry Adams's juxtaposition of the Virgin and the Dynamo at the turn of the century.⁹⁶

Likewise, antipornography activists reject deconstructive attention to textual power in favor of dramatizing the actual power of rapists. If anything, they reinvest

⁹⁶ For a fuller discussion of this cultural matrix, see Marx.

pornographic texts with the absolute authority that deconstruction seeks to subvert. In so doing, antipornography activists and many environmental writers are deliberately, and sometimes strategically, metaphysical. Their texts, whether celebrated nature poetry or deplored pornography, are shrines of transparent language in which there is no difference between the signifier and the signified, between the word and its referent. Like fundamentalists who read the Bible as the living word of God, environmentalist critics often hear the unmediated voice of Nature channeled through Her favored medium-poets. Critics of pornography treat the postures in Penthouse as the oracular Rosetta Stone of a monolithic male psyche. Susan Griffin insists that "above all, pornography is ritual. It is an enacted drama which is laden with meaning, which imparts a vision of the world. The altar for the ritual is a woman's body. And the ritual which is carried out on this altar is the desecration of the flesh" (79). That the various fetish behaviors featured in pornography, which could easily be seen as structured rituals, are here subsumed into a singular ritual reflects the narrowly selective range granted to human sexuality by antipornography activists.⁹⁷

Griffin's demonizing invocation of the Black Mass⁹⁸ in this passage indicates the extreme duality of the pornography debate, and also reveals what a very religious debate it really is. In a discussion of the public furor over photographer Andres Serrano's

⁹⁷ For further discussion of diverse sexualities marginalized in antipornography rhetoric, see Duggan and Hunter.

⁹⁸ The Black Mass is a Satanist rite which blasphemes the Eucharist. It uses a woman's body as a parodic altar.

controversial Piss Christ (1987), Lee Quinby notes the slippage in contemporary political discourse between condemnations of obscenity couched in legal terms and accusations of blasphemy couched in religious terms (120-21). Quinby associates this slippage with the institutional sacralization of art, a process by which artworks are rendered sacred and canonical and thereby static, leached of their ability to offer social or political critique (121).⁹⁹ Quinby condemns such sacralization in favor of a political art. Like the anti-pornography activists, Quinby here confuses art's reception with the art itself. Artworks, after all, do not sacralize themselves; viewers, readers, and critics enshrine, canonize, condemn, or ignore them in a complicated cultural interplay. The Renaissance paintings that Quinby uses as examples of sacralized art can be read politically, as Quinby herself demonstrates. Nevertheless, the issue of sacralization, or canonization, is relevant to a discussion of pornography and environmental literature.

Frances Ferguson discusses the notion of art as alibi, in which formalist theories of representation deny any link between the text and the actual world. In such theories, all representations are treated as fictions, providing "quotation marks" that "suspend any interest in the effects of those actions" represented (686). It is precisely this artistic alibi that MacKinnon and Dworkin aim to destroy in their critiques of pornography. Critic Susan Rubin Suleiman notes that literary theory has aided and abetted the artistic alibi in its exclusive focus on the signifier over the signified. In an essay on Bataille, Suleiman points to the way that pornography in particular has been read "primarily as a metaphor

⁹⁹ Quinby's definition of the sacred in this analysis is based on fundamentalist and apocalyptic religious thought, and obviously is not considering various liberatory theologies in which the sacred is dynamic rather than static.

for the transgressive use of language effected by modern writing" rather than for any social or moral transgressions of its content (119). Many environmental literary critics blame precisely this conventional separation of text and world for a general lack of attention to environmental problems in literary studies. In an essay attempting to extend textual attention to the environment as a Bakhtinian speaking subject and thereby grant the world literary attention, Patrick Murphy asks: "When selenium poisons groundwater, causes animal deformities, and reduces the ability of California farmers to continue to overcultivate, are these signs that we can read?" ("Ground" 153).

Bataille is a long way from the Penthouse Forum, and one does well to bear in mind that most of the pornography attacked by censors would never come to the professional attention of literary critics. In this regard, the sacralization of art through cultural canonization does play a role in establishing an artistic alibi for certain works and not for others. While most opponents of censorship are First Amendment absolutists who do not weigh artistic value in their defense of censored materials, most arguments against censorship rely on the invocation of artistic values or on the image of the artist as a misunderstood and rebellious iconoclast. Interestingly, such reliance on traditional conceptions of the artist is at odds with the postmodern relativism that denies any difference between a pornographic text and any other text. The conventional divisions between art and pornography become strategic definitions for academics and publishers marketing erotica. Susan Griffin compares pornography to advertising and argues that both types of imagery impact consumer behavior (103).¹⁰⁰ Civil liberties activist Nat

¹⁰⁰ John Mulrooney, poetry editor of the self-styled "erotica" magazine Paramour

Hentoff goes beyond the sacralized to the sacred itself when he demonstrates that sections of the Old Testament would be censored under the MacKinnon/Dworkin antipornography legislation (342). Antipornography activists and environmental literary critics are united in their opposition to the artistic alibi that divides art and world, an alibi they associate with what they consider debased postmodern social and aesthetic values.

Instead, antipornography activists and environmental literary critics holistically unite texts and the world. Societal anxiety about the effects of pornographic texts can be seen as a reflection of a widespread anxiety about sexual and cultural reproduction in a damaged physical and social environment. The pervasive hopes and fears about extratextual reproduction, about texts coming to life or reproducing themselves in the actual world, can be seen as a compensatory strategy for allaying this reproductive anxiety. Texts are being invested with the fecundity that the natural world, and natural humans, are in danger of losing.

Obviously, debates about pornography predate environmentalism. Judith Butler is sarcastic at MacKinnon's and Dworkin's expense when she explains "why representations do not jump off the page to club us over the head" (114) but the figure of

[Cambridge, MA], notes "the hierarchical lattices of credibility and proximity to respectability [through] which . . . just about all of the products, either mags themselves or the stuff we advertise, set themselves off and become the product that really is for sale (the proximity to credibility or 'art')." Perhaps the very act of retaining a poetry editor is what distinguishes erotica from pornography. Andrea Dworkin denies that there is any distinction at all: "[E]rotica is simply high-class pornography: better produced, better conceived, better executed, better packaged, designed for a better class of consumer Intellectuals, especially, call what they themselves produce or like 'erotica,' which means simply that a very bright person made or likes whatever it is" [xlii]. Mulrooney's explicitly financial language tends to support Dworkin's point.

the text or work of art which comes to life is an ancient and popular one and can be seen in the myth of Pygmalion, in the fairy tale of Pinocchio, and in the popular works of Stephen King.¹⁰¹ At least part of the pornographic project is to create a text lively enough to arouse an actual body. In this function, pornography self-referentially merges the concrete and the abstract: the abstract textual or photographic representation, or the mental images they suggest, contribute to the production of concrete physical arousal.

This masturbatory interaction of text and world conforms to the Romantic concept of poetic logic which, as defined by Charles Altieri, provides a "dramatic experience synthesizing concrete and abstract, world and words, dynamic nature and prehending mind." In a discussion of "On Poesy or Art" in *Biographia Literaria*, Altieri notes that Coleridge developed the theory of poetic logic to explain a discourse "where the usual problems of reference, and hence of subject and object, do not apply." Instead, the Romantic poet was composing in a language that, unlike public language, "was at once concrete and revealing values significant for a whole community." Through this language, the Romantic poet could avoid separating the values contained in the poem from the poem itself; he could connect the text and the world (31). Dworkin dismissively insists that any pleasurable consumption of pornography requires a Coleridgean suspension of disbelief (136-37), but despite herself she implies that such consumers enter into the special poetic logic of Romanticism, albeit vulgarized into a smutty fantasy world. A. R. Ammons promotes the value of Romantic poetic logic even in its

¹⁰¹ King explores this concept in many of his works. Anyone interested in this completely irrelevant tangent may consult my "Canonical Ambivalence in Stephen King."

masturbatory fantasy form. "Summer Place" insists that masturbation exemplifies the connection between text and world:

masturbation is handy, cheap, and clean: it engorges
itself on phantasy, the line between imagination
and the seminal vesicle direct: hit the right image

and you come immediately: the scrotum is the conjurer's
bag of stones, bones, trinkets that are spilled out . . . (187)

Ammons's archaic spelling of fantasy and his references to imagination and conjuring can be read as deliberate allusions to a Romantic discourse. Ammons describes masturbation as "desire seized and placed / in context and given course" (187). As a channeling of desire, masturbation is therefore placed along a continuum with the highest spiritual goals in which similarly "the spirit flows, it moves from the full self" (188). Butler notes that antipornography rhetoric itself participates in this merging of text and world.

Antipornography activists argue that "certain fantasies are 'of' force or violence, but are forcibly imposed by certain kinds of representations. In this sense, the ostensible content of the representation and its rhetorical force are conflated and exchanged" (115).

Ferguson describes photographed and filmed pornography as "importantly imaging some form of representational collapse, in which the representation of action involves the action" (684).

Both antipornography activists and environmental writers invoke Romantic concepts of textuality in which text and world interact and interrelate. This appeal to

Romanticism can be seen as a response to the disassociation of text and world in much postmodern thought. However, in its insistence that texts can impact the world, this Romantic appeal can also be read as a reaction to an endangered and endangering world on which the average person seems to have too little impact. The current media trend towards virtual reality is marked not only by complex computer simulations but also by a spate of live-action and videotaped "entertainment" products like the syndicated documentary drama "Cops" that re-package trauma for broadcast feed. One experiment in nonexploitive live drama, MTV's true soap opera "The Real World," directly evoked reproductive anxiety when one of its stars contracted AIDS. The American public is also subjected to a barrage of violent and frightening live video images of death whenever a catastrophe occurs: consider the Los Angeles riots or the Gulf War. Much of the technical imagery of these newscasts reappears in more traditional entertainment genres: the film Patriot Games features a computerized warroom scene eerily reminiscent of the televised bombing missions of the Gulf War. Social ecologist Andrew Ross notes that film footage of environmental disasters is widely circulated alongside news coverage of genocidal atrocities (171). In the face of such blurred distinctions between documentary and drama, it is pointless to deny absolutely a connection between the text and the world.

Many opponents of censorship point to the generally dismal state of media images to defend pornography. They argue that pornography is no more inflammatory than any other popular imagery and should therefore be subject to no greater censorship. Indeed, some clinical studies suggest that prime-time mainstream media images are more likely

than pornography to provoke violence against women.¹⁰² One pornography editor admits that a rapist may well be influenced by pornography. Equally influential, however, are "his TV dinners, his bad clothes sense, his own sense of his own ugliness, the People magazines he read[s], . . . TV, . . . polyester, comb-overs, and living in this society" (Mulrooney). The antipornography activists have no good response to such arguments, except to offer more comprehensive censorship.¹⁰³ In contrast, environmental criticism offers a crusade to salvage and restore both healthy environments and meaningful art. Critic Jay Parini finds that "[e]nvironmental studies marks a return to activism and social responsibility." As a literary movement, environmental criticism "marks a re-engagement with realism, with the actual universe of rocks, trees and rivers that lies behind the wilderness of signs." In an interview with Parini, John Elder says that the project of environmental criticism is "creative grieving": "We've come to a moment when we can think about loss, can absorb the extent of the damage done and perhaps engage in real action" (Parini 52-53).

¹⁰² See the overview of clinical research by Donnerstein and Linz. Edward Donnerstein has consistently protested the use by anti-pornography activists of his work on the effects of pornography.

¹⁰³ I have already mentioned music censorship. Another recent censorship battle is being fought over political correctness and the teaching of potentially offensive literature. Some schools have found the word "nigger" injurious even within anti-racist contexts and have therefore banned The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. While local efforts of this type do not carry the legislative weight that antipornography activism brandishes, they are particularly pertinent to literary studies. See Hentoff.

Most of the real action that has been called for consists of a return to representational art.¹⁰⁴ Critic Denys Trussell refers to Teilhard de Chardin's concept of the noosphere, or planetary consciousness, and finds that the "vital tasks of literature" are "to maintain the health of the noosphere; to cleanse it of spiritual pollution, venality and the lies of economism" (7). Trussell suggests that the work of art can accomplish these somewhat daunting tasks through the strength of its *gestalt*, which is the "artistic corollary" to the "wholeness" of an ecosystem (172-73). Critic Pete Gunter calls for a return to mimetic landscape painting in order to convey an environmentalist viewpoint to "the popular mind" (215). In their emphasis on popular influence and spiritual benefit, these prescriptions for an environmental literature reveal an Arnoldian didacticism consonant with recent conservative campaigns for educational reform.

This dissertation shows that Oliver, Hogan, Snyder, and Ammons to a large extent meet these environmentalist artistic criteria. Oliver's poetic imagery is almost exclusively mimetic and drawn from the natural world. In A Poetry Handbook, she emphasizes the importance of "universal images" (105). Most of her poems seek spiritual redemption in the natural world. Hogan feels that the role of the artist is "to build and strengthen a new vision of the world" in order to combat "the destructive

¹⁰⁴ Some more practical-minded souls have called for greater attention to legal texts. Mark Schlenz calls the environmental assessment documentation required by the National Environmental Protection Act "THE MOST critical form of 'environmental writing' I can imagine." Schlenz's point is well-taken when one considers that the MacKinnon/Dworkin legislation, although defeated, served as a model for a draft of the Jesse Helms-sponsored bill prohibiting federal funding to objectionable artists (Butler 108). We can see a similar legislative battle shaping up in the current (manufactured) controversy over Internet pornography.

technology that is interfering with the survival of all people" ("Transformation" 409). Her poetry is intended "to restore us to a unity with earth and the rest of the universe" ("Who" 177). Snyder sees art as assimilating experiences which can then be offered back to the artist's community as "the 'thought of enlightenment'" (Real 174). He finds poetry integrating and stabilizing as well as liberatory, and stresses the importance of poetry that circulates "deep archetypes," which are not too far afield from Oliver's universal images (PS 93). Ammons's pervasive use of sexual metaphors for poetry liberally employs perhaps the most universal trope. His attention to canonical poetic tradition shows a concern for stable artistic integration. He insists that poetry conveys values for living ("Poetry" 14). All four poets write specifically about environmental hazards and urge greater care for the natural world as an essential human project. Their appeals to nature for poetic and political authority often lead them into essentialist definitions of gender that inform much socially conservative thought. Such definitions, however, are endemic in contemporary society which, because of environmental degradation, faces unprecedented threats to human reproduction and to the continued existence of the human species.

Works Cited

- Absher, Tom. "World Enough." Rev. of Twelve Moons, by Mary Oliver. Ploughshares 6 (1981): 228-42.
- Adler, Margot. "The Juice and the Mystery." 1987. Plant 151-54.
- Allen, Paula Gunn. Interview. Coltelli 10-39.
- . "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective." Allen 3-22.
- . The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions. [2nd ed.] Boston: Beacon, 1992.
- , ed. Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs. NY: MLA, 1983.
- Altieri, Charles. Enlarging the Temple: New Directions in American Poetry during the 1960s. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1979.
- Ammons, A. R. Collected Poems 1951-1971. NY: Norton, 1972.
- . Diversifications: Poems. NY: Norton, 1975.
- . Garbage. NY: Norton, 1993.
- . "Inside Out." 1983. Ecstatic Occasions, Expedient Forms: 65 Leading Contemporary Poets Select and Comment on Their Poems. Ed. David Lehman. NY: Macmillan, 1987. 1-2.
- . "Interview/A. R. Ammons." Interview with David Grossvogel. Diacritics 3 (Winter 1973): 47-53.
- . "An Interview with A. R. Ammons." Interview with William Walsh. Michigan Quarterly Review 28.1 (Winter 1989): 105-20.
- . "Poetry Is Action." American Poetry Review July-Aug. 1994: 13-14.
- . The Snow Poems. NY: Norton, 1977.
- . Sphere: The Form of a Motion. NY: Norton, 1974.
- . Sumerian Vistas: Poems. NY: Norton, 1987.
- . "Summer Place." Hudson Review 30.2 (Summer 1977): 173-209.

- . Tape for the Turn of the Year. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1965.
- Anderson, Lorraine, ed. Sisters of the Earth: Women's Prose and Poetry About Nature. NY: Vintage, 1991.
- Applewhite, James. "Postmodernist Allegory and the Denial of Nature." Kenyon Review 11.1 (Winter 1989): 1-17.
- Asher, Levi. "Beat News." 4 Aug. 1995. Online. Literary Kicks. Internet. 4 Nov. 1995.
- . "Re: Michael McClure quote query?" E-mail to author. 5 Nov. 1995.
- Atwood, Margaret. The Handmaid's Tale. Boston: Houghton, 1986.
- Baker, Carol. "1414 SE Lambert Street." Halper 24-29.
- Barber, David. Rev. of New and Selected Poems, by Mary Oliver. Poetry July 1993: 233-37.
- Batman, Alex. "Gary Snyder." American Poets Since World War II. Ed. Donald J. Greiner. Vol. 2. Dictionary of Literary Biography 5. Detroit: Gale, 1980. 274-78.
- Berg, Elizabeth L. "The Third Woman." Rev. of L'Enigme de la femme: la femme dans les textes de Freud, by Sarah Kofman and Speculum de l'autre femme and Amante marine de Friedrich Nietzsche, by Luce Irigaray. Diacritics 12 (1982): 11-20.
- Berkhofer, Robert F., Jr. The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present. NY: Knopf, 1978.
- Berry, Wendell. "A Secular Pilgrimage." Hudson Review 23.3 (Autumn 1970): 401-24.
- Biehl, Janet. Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics. Boston: South End, 1991.
- Bloom, Harold. "A. R. Ammons: The Breaking of the Vessels." Salmagundi 31-32 (Fall 1975-Winter 1976): 185-203.
- . The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry. NY: Oxford UP, 1973.
- . "Dark and Radiant Peripheries: Mark Strand and A. R. Ammons." Southern Review 8 (Winter 1972): 133-49.

- . "Introduction." A. R. Ammons. Ed. Harold Bloom. NY: Chelsea House, 1986. 1-31.
- . "The New Transcendentalism: The Visionary Strain in Merwin, Ashbery, and Ammons." Chicago Review 24.3 (Winter 1973): 25-43.
- . The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1971.
- . The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages. NY: Harcourt, 1994.
- Bly, Robert. Iron John: A Book about Men. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1990.
- Bonds, Diane S. "The Language of Nature in the Poetry of Mary Oliver." Women's Studies 21 (1992): 1-15.
- Boruch, Marianne. "Oracular Fever." Rev. of American Primitive, by Mary Oliver. Iowa Review 15.1 (1985): 131-35.
- Bruchac, Joseph. "Survival Comes This Way: Contemporary Native American Poetry." Harris and Aguero. 196-205.
- Burton, Susan. "Uniform in The Dharma Bums." Fall 1994. Online. Wilderness on the Web. Internet. 15 May 1995.
- Butler, Judith. "The Force of Fantasy: Feminism, Mapplethorpe, and Discursive Excess." differences 2.2 (1990): 105-25.
- Butler, Octavia. Dawn: Xenogenesis. NY: Warner, 1987.
- Campbell, Sue Ellen. "The Land and Language of Desire: Where Deep Ecology and Post-Structuralism Meet." Western American Literature 24.3 (1989): 199-211.
- Carolan, Trevor. "The Wild Mind of Gary Snyder." Shambhala Sun May 1996: 19-26.
- Carr, Caleb. The Alienist. 1994. NY: Bantam, 1995.
- Castro, Michael. Interpreting the Indian: Twentieth-Century Poets and the Native American. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1983.
- Chanel. Advertisement for Total Defense Moisture Lotion. Glamour Oct. 1995: 79.
- Churchill, Ward. Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians. Ed. M. Annette Jaimes. Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 1992.

- Churchill, Ward and Winona LaDuke. "Native North America: The Political Economy of Radioactive Colonization." *Jaimes* 241-66.
- Clark, Miriam Marty. "The Gene, the Computer, and Information Processing in A. R. Ammons." *Twentieth Century Literature* 36.1 (Spring 1990): 1-9.
- Clark, Walter H., Jr. "What Teaching Environmental Literature Might Be." *Waage* 4-8.
- Colborn, Theo, Dianne Dumanoski, and John Peterson Myers. *Our Stolen Future: Are We Threatening Our Fertility, Intelligence, and Survival?* NY: Dutton, 1996.
- Coletta, W. John. "The Great Web of Being: Ecological and Evolutionary Aesthetics and the Ideology of Biology." Diss. U of Oregon, 1989.
- Collins, Pamela. "Not Ants but Ants: Nature as Metaphor (or Not) in Native American Texts." Unpublished paper, 1996.
- Coltelli, Laura. *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak*. American Indian Lives. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990.
- Cook, Bruce. *The Beat Generation*. NY: Scribner's, 1971.
- Coward, Rosalind. "Sexual Violence and Sexuality." *Sexuality: A Reader*. Ed. Feminist Review. London: Virago, 1987. 307-25.
- Crichton, Michael. *Jurassic Park*. NY: Knopf, 1990.
- Cushman, Stephen. *Fictions of Form in American Poetry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993.
- Daly, Mary. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon, 1978.
- Dances With Wolves*. Dir. Kevin Costner. Orion Pictures, 1990.
- Dellamora, Richard. *Apocalyptic Overtures: Sexual Politics and the Sense of an Ending*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1994.
- DeRosa, Janet Elizabeth. "Occurrences of Promise and Terror: The Poetry of A. R. Ammons." Diss. Brown U, 1978.
- Devall, Bill and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1985.

- Donnerstein, Edward and Daniel Linz. "Mass Media Sexual Violence and Male Viewers: Current Theory and Research." American Behavioral Scientist 29.5 (May/June 1986): 601-18.
- Doty, Mark. "Natural Science: In Praise of Mary Oliver." Provincetown Arts 11 (1995): 26-29.
- Douglas, Mary. Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. 1966. London: Routledge, 1984.
- Duggan, Lisa and Nan D. Hunter. Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture. NY: Routledge, 1995.
- Dworkin, Andrea. Pornography: Men Possessing Women. 1979. NY: Plume-Penguin, 1989.
- Echols, Alice. "The New Feminism of Yin and Yang." Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality. Ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson. NY: Monthly Review, 1983. 439-59.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment. NY: Anchor-Doubleday, 1983.
- Elder, John. Imagining the Earth: Poetry and the Vision of Nature. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1985.
- . "Seeing Through the Fire: Writers in the Nuclear Age." Writing in a Nuclear Age. Ed. Jim Schley. Hanover, NH: New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly: UP of New England, 1983. 223-30.
- England, Charles R. "A Look at the Indian Health Service Policy of Sterilization, 1972-1976." Red Ink 3.1 (Spring 1994): n. pag. Online. Internet. 23 Aug. 1995.
- Espada, Martín. Poetry reading. Suffolk University, Boston. 16 Nov. 1995.
- Evernden, Neil. The Social Creation of Nature. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992.
- Fagin, Dan. "Fertility Fears." Mademoiselle July 1996: 116-21.
- Faludi, Susan. Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women. 1991. NY: Anchor-Doubleday, 1992.
- Falwell, Jerry. Interview with Sharon Collins. Network Earth. TBS. 13 Feb. 1994. Transcript. Online. Network Earth forum. America Online. 1 Oct. 1995.

- Fast, Robin Riley. "Moore, Bishop, and Oliver: Thinking Back, Re-Seeing the Sea." Twentieth Century Literature 39.3 (Fall 1993): 364-79.
- Ferguson, Frances. "Pornography: The Theory." Critical Inquiry 21.3 (Spring 1995): 670-95.
- Flax, Jane. "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory." Signs 12.4 (1987): 621-43.
- Folsom, L. Edwin. "Gary Snyder's Descent to Turtle Island: Searching for Fossil Love." Western American Literature 15 (Summer 1980): 103-21.
- Foreman, Dave. "Gary Snyder: Tribal Founder." Halper 362-64.
- Four Directions Council. "The Uranium Industry and Indigenous Peoples of North America." Statement submitted to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. 12 Aug. 1987. Online. Fourth World Documentation Project. Internet. 23 Aug. 1995.
- Fried, Philip Henry. "Three Essays on the Poetry of A. R. Ammons." Diss. State U of NY, Stony Brook, NY, 1978.
- Fromm, Harold. "Aldo Leopold: Aesthetic 'Anthropocentrist.'" ISLE 1.1 (Spring 1993): 43-49.
- Gaard, Greta, ed. Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
- Glottfelty, Cheryll and Harold Fromm, eds. The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996.
- Golden, Daniel. "Drugs and Death in a College Town." Boston Globe Magazine 27 Aug. 1995: 16+.
- Gregorson, Linda. Rev. of American Primitive, by Mary Oliver. Poetry Oct. 1984: 38-9.
- Griffin, Susan. Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature. NY: Harper, 1981.
- Gunter, Pete A. Y. "The Disembodied Parasite and Other Tragedies; or: Modern Western Philosophy and How to Get Out of It." Oelschlaeger 205-19.

- Halper, Jon, ed. Garv Snyder: Dimensions of a Life. San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1991.
- Haraway, Donna J. "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others." Cultural Studies. Ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler. NY: Routledge, 1992. 295-337.
- . Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. NY: Routledge, 1991.
- Harris, Marie and Kathleen Aguero, eds. A Gift of Tongues: Critical Challenges in Contemporary American Poetry. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1987.
- Hartman, Geoffrey H. Rev. of Collected Poems 1951-1971, by A. R. Ammons. New York Times Book Review 19 Nov. 1972: 39-40.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. "Searching for Common Ground." Soulé and Lease 47-61.
- , ed. Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science. New Practices of Inquiry. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991.
- Heaney, Seamus. North. London: Faber, 1975.
- Hegarty, Emily. "Canonical Ambivalence in Stephen King." Unpublished paper, 1996.
- Heller, Chaia. "For the Love of Nature: Ecology and the Cult of the Romantic." Gaard 219-42.
- Hentoff, Nat. Free Speech for Me-- But Not for Thee: How the American Left and Right Relentlessly Censor Each Other. NY: HarperCollins, 1992.
- Hicks, Jack. "Poetic Composting in Gary Snyder's Left Out in the Rain." Murphy 247-57.
- Hochman, Jhan. "Re: 'Eating,' or, On Those Who Escape the Playpen." 21 Nov. 1995. Online posting. ASLE Discussion List. Internet. 24 Nov. 1995.
- Hogan, Linda. The Book of Medicines: Poems. Minneapolis: Coffee House, 1993.
- . "The Feathers." New Age Journal June 1995: 64-65.
- . Interview. Coltelli 70-86.
- . Mean Spirit: A Novel. NY: Atheneum, 1990.
- . Savings: Poems. Minneapolis: Coffee House, 1988.

- . Seeing Through the Sun. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1985.
- . Solar Storms: A Novel. NY: Scribner, 1995.
- "The Transformation of Tribalism." Book Forum 5 (1981): 403-9.
- . "Waking Up the Rake." Parabola (Summer 1988). Rpt. in Anderson 346-52.
- . "Walking." Parabola (Summer 1990). Rpt. in Anderson 9-12.
- . "Who Puts Together." Allen 169-77.
- Hohmann, Marti. "The Bigger O: Representing Orgasm in Feminist Porn." Dirty Pictures Panel. Dirt Conference. Harvard University, Cambridge. 16 Mar. 1996.
- Holder, Alan. A. R. Ammons. Boston: Twayne, 1978.
- Homans, Margaret. Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë, and Emily Dickinson. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1980.
- Howard, Richard. Alone with America: Essays on the Art of Poetry in the United States Since 1950. Enlarged ed. NY: Atheneum, 1980.
- Irigaray, Luce. Speculum of the Other Woman. 1974. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.
- Jaimes, M. Annette. "Introduction: Sand Creek the Morning After." Jaimes 1-12.
- , ed. The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance. Race and Resistance Ser. Boston: South End, 1992.
- Jaimes, M. Annette, with Theresa Halsey. "American Indian Women: At the Center of Indigenous Resistance in Contemporary North America." Jaimes 311-44.
- James, P. D. The Children of Men. 1992. NY: Warner, 1994.
- Jurassic Park. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Amblin Entertainment, 1993.
- Kanaseki, Hisao. "An Easy Rider at Yase." Halper 70-75.
- Keller, Catherine. "Women Against Wasting the World: Notes on Eschatology and Ecology." Diamond and Orenstein 249-63.
- Kennedy, David. "Frankenchrist versus the State: The New Right, Rock Music and the Case of Jello Biafra." Journal of Popular Culture 24.1 (Summer 1990): 131-48.

- Kerouac, Jack. The Dharma Bums. 1958. NY: Penguin, 1976.
- Klink, William R. "Paterson Forty Years After Paterson." Sagetrieb (Spring 1987): 95-108.
- . "Site and Sense in 'Corsons Inlet' by A. R. Ammons." Journal of American Studies 24.2 (August 1990): 221-28.
- Knighton, José. "Eco-Porn and the Manipulation of Desire." Wild Earth 3.1 (Spring 1993): 76-78.
- Kolodny, Annette. "The Influence of Anxiety: Prolegomena to a Study of the Production of Poetry by Women." 1985. Harris and Aguero 112-41.
- . The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1975.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Stabat Mater." Trans. León S. Roudiez. The Kristeva Reader. Ed. Toril Moi. NY: Columbia UP, 1986. 160-86. Rpt. of "Hérétique de l'amour." Tel Quel 74 (Winter 1977): 30-49.
- Kroeber, Karl. Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind. NY: Columbia UP, 1994.
- Lacayo, Richard. "Assault by Paragraph." Time 17 Jan. 1994: 62.
- The Last of the Mohicans. Dir. Michael Mann. Morgan Creek, 1992.
- Lauter, Paul, ed. The Heath Anthology of American Literature. Vol. 2. Lexington, MA: Heath, 1990.
- LeGuin, Ursula K. Always Coming Home. 1985. NY: Bantam, 1987.
- . "Text, Silence, Performance." 1986. Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places. 1989. NY: Harper, 1990. 179-87.
- Lewis, Martin W. "Environmental History Challenges the Myth of a Primordial Eden." Chronicle of Higher Education 4 May 1994: A56.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. "'Nature' as Aesthetic Norm." Modern Language Notes (1927): 444-50. Rpt. in Essays in the History of Ideas. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1948. 69-77.
- Lovelock, James. Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth. NY: Oxford UP, 1979.

- Lutts, Ralph H. "Recent Historical Studies of the Ecological Indian." Online. ASLE Home Page. Internet. 8 Aug. 1995.
- Luttwack, Leonard. The Role of Place in Literature. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1984.
- Lyon, Thomas J. "Twenty Years Later-- A Coda." Murphy 44-48.
- MacKinnon, Catharine. Only Words. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993.
- Mahar, J. Michael. "Scenes from the Sidelines." Halper 8-15.
- Marks, Elaine and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. New French Feminisms: An Anthology. NY: Schocken, 1981.
- Marx, Leo. The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America. NY: Oxford UP, 1964.
- McClintock, James I. Nature's Kindred Spirits: Aldo Leopold, Joseph Wood Krutch, Edward Abbey, Annie Dillard, and Gary Snyder. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1994.
- McGuire, Cathleen and Colleen McGuire. What Is Ecofeminism Anyway? NY: Ecofeminist Visions Emerging, 1991.
- McGuirk, Kevin. "Re: Ammons." E-mail to author. 24 May 1995.
- . "The View From Space: A. R. Ammons' Sphere: The Form of a Motion." NEMLA Convention. Park Plaza Hotel, Boston. 31 Mar. 1995.
- McNew, Janet. "Mary Oliver and the Tradition of Romantic Nature Poetry." Contemporary Literature 30.1 (Spring 1989): 59-77.
- Merchant, Carolyn. Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World. NY: Routledge, 1992.
- Molesworth, Charles. The Fierce Embrace: A Study of Contemporary American Poetry. Columbia, MO: U of Missouri P, 1979.
- . Gary Snyder's Vision: Poetry and the Real Work. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1983.
- Momaday, N. Scott. "The Native Voice." Columbia Literary History of the United States. Ed. Emory Elliot et al. NY: Columbia UP, 1988. 5-15.

- Montague, Peter. "PCBs Diminish Penis Size." Rachel's Hazardous Waste News 13 Jan. 1994: n. pag. Online. Internet. 29 June 1995.
- . "Warning on Male Reproductive Health." Rachel's Environment & Health Weekly 20 Apr. 1995: n. pag. Online. Internet. 29 June 1995.
- Mulrooney, John. "I'm snyder than you are." E-mail to author. 13 June 1995.
- Murphy, Patrick D. "Ground, Pivot, Motion: Ecofeminist Theory, Dialogics, and Literary Practice." Hypatia 6.1 (Spring 1991): 146-61.
- . "Introduction." Murphy 1-18.
- . Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques. Albany: State U of NY P, 1995.
- , ed. Critical Essays on Gary Snyder. Boston: Hall, 1990.
- Nelson, Lin. "The Place of Women in Polluted Places." Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism. Ed. Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein. San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1990. 173-88.
- Nelson, Richard. "An Elder of the Tribe." Halper 344-51.
- Nielson, Dorothy M. "Prosopopoeia and the Ethics of Ecological Advocacy in the Poetry of Denise Levertov and Gary Snyder." Contemporary Literature 34.4 (Winter 1993): 691-713.
- Nisi Period. "Entropy Happens." Soon the Love Balloon Will Pop. Audiocassette. RRRecords, 1992.
- Nordström, Lars. Theodore Roethke, William Stafford, and Gary Snyder: The Ecological Metaphor as Transformed Regionalism. Stockholm: Uppsala, 1989.
- Oelschlaeger, Max, ed. The Wilderness Condition: Essays on Environment and Civilization. Washington, DC: Island, 1992.
- Oerlemans, Onno Dag. "'The Meanest Thing that Feels': Anthropomorphizing Animals in Romanticism." Mosaic 27.1 (March 1994): 1-32.
- Oliver, Mary. "Against the Grain." Interview with Mindy Weinreb. Our Other Voices: Nine Poets Speaking. Ed. John Wheatcroft. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1991. 140-51.
- . American Primitive: Poems. Boston: Little, 1983.

- . Blue Pastures. San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1995.
- . "Dogs." Provincetown Arts 11 (1995): 23.
- . Dream Work. NY: Atlantic Monthly, 1986.
- . House of Light. Boston: Beacon, 1990.
- . New and Selected Poems. Boston: Beacon, 1992.
- . A Poetry Handbook. San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1994.
- . Twelve Moons. Boston: Little, 1979.
- . White Pine: Poems and Prose Poems. San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1994.
- Oppenheimer, Paul. "The Innocence of a Mirror." Rev. of House of Light and New and Selected Poems, by Mary Oliver. American Book Review Oct.-Nov. 1993: 11.
- Ostriker, Alicia. "Natural Facts." Rev. of Dream Work, by Mary Oliver. Nation 30 Aug. 1986: 148-50.
- Paisano, Edna L. "The American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut Population." Population Profile of the United States: 1995. US Bureau of the Census. Online. Internet. 19 June 1996.
- Parini, Jay. "The Greening of the Humanities." New York Times Magazine. 29 Oct. 1995: 52-53.
- Parkinson, Thomas. "The Poetry of Gary Snyder." Southern Review 4 (1968): 616-32. Rpt. in Murphy 21-34.
- Patriot Games. Dir. Phillip Noyce. Paramount, 1992.
- Paul, Sherman. Hewing to Experience: Essays and Reviews on Recent American Poetry and Poetics, Nature and Culture. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1989.
- . In Search of the Primitive: Rereading David Antin, Jerome Rothenberg, and Gary Snyder. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1986.
- Piercy, Marge. He, She and It. 1991. NY: Fawcett Crest-Ballantine, 1993.
- . Woman on the Edge of Time. 1976. NY: Fawcett Crest-Ballantine, 1983.

- Pinchbeck, Daniel. "Children of the Beats." New York Times 5 Nov. 1995, late ed. Online. New York Times Online. Lexis. 15 Nov. 1995.
- Plant, Judith. "Toward a New World: Introduction." Plant 1-4.
- , ed. Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989.
- Plumwood, Val. "Feminism and Ecofeminism: Beyond the Dualistic Assumptions of Women, Men and Nature." Ecologist Jan./Feb. 1992: 8-13.
- . "Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism." Hypatia 6.1 (Spring 1991): 3-27.
- Pocahontas. Dir. Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg. Walt Disney/Buena Vista Pictures, 1995.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Philosophy of Composition." 1846. The Norton Anthology of American Literature. Ed. Ronald Gottesman et al. Vol. 1. NY: Norton, 1979. 1319-29.
- Pratt, Annis. Dancing with Goddesses: Archetypes, Poetry, and Empowerment. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.
- Quigley, Peter. "Rethinking Resistance: Environmentalism, Literature, and Poststructural Theory." Environmental Ethics 14 (Winter 1992): 291-306.
- Quinby, Lee. Anti-Apocalypse: Exercises in Genealogical Criticism. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1994.
- Raloff, Janet. "The Gender Benders." Science News 8 Jan. 1994: 24-27.
- . "That Feminine Touch." Science News 22 Jan. 1994: 56-59.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Power." 1974. The Fact of a Doorframe: Poems Selected and New 1950-1984. NY: Norton, 1984. 225.
- Roach, Catherine. "Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relation." Hypatia 6.1 (Spring 1991): 46-59.
- Robbins, David. "Gary Snyder's 'Burning Island.'" A Book of Rereadings in Recent American Poetry. Lincoln, NE: Best Cellar, 1979. Rpt. in Murphy 89-105.
- Roof, Judith. "The Ideology of Fair Use: Xeroxing and Reproductive Rights." Hypatia 7.2 (Spring 1992): 63-73.

- Rose, Ellen Cronan. "The Good Mother: From Gaia to Gilead." Frontiers 12.1: 77-97.
- Rose, Wendy. "The Great Pretenders: Further Reflections on Whiteshamanism." Jaimes 403-21.
- Ross, Andrew. The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life: Nature's Debt to Society. London: Verso, 1994.
- Ryser, Rudolph C. "The Anti-Indian Movement in the Wise Use Movement." Olympia, WA: Center for World Indigenous Studies, 1993. Online. Fourth World Documentation Project. Internet. 23 Aug. 1995.
- Sanfield, Steve. "As It Is." Halper 117-19.
- Saunders, Michael. "Gangsta Warfare." Boston Sunday Globe 10 Mar. 1996: B29+.
- Scarberry, Susan J. "Grandmother Spider's Lifeline." Allen 100-107.
- Schlenz, Mark. "Re: What is Environmental Writing?" 16 Feb. 1995. Online posting. ASLE Discussion List. Internet. 16 Feb. 1995.
- Schneider, Steven. "A. R. Ammons: The Poetics of Widening Scope." Diss. U of Iowa, 1986.
- Shepard, Paul. "A Post-Historic Primitivism." Oelschlaeger 40-89.
- Shiva, Vandana. "Interview: Vandana Shiva talks to Judithe Bizot." Unesco Courier March 1992: 8-11.
- Smith, Patricia Clark. "Ain't Seen You Since: Dissent among Female Relatives in American Indian Women's Poetry." Allen 108-26.
- Snyder, Gary. Axe Handles: Poems. San Francisco: North Point, 1983.
- . The Back Country. NY: New Directions, 1968.
- . Earth House Hold: Technical Notes & Queries To Fellow Dharma Revolutionaries. NY: New Directions, 1969.
- . "Harriet Callicote's Stone in Kansas." Halper 169-73.
- . Interview. April, 1965. Six Poets of the San Francisco Renaissance: Portraits and Checklists. By David Kherdian. Fresno, CA: Giligia Press, 1967. 47-70.

- . Left Out in the Rain: New Poems 1947-1985. San Francisco: North Point, 1986.
 - . No Nature: New and Selected Poems. NY: Pantheon, 1992.
 - . A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds. Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1995.
 - . The Practice of the Wild: Essays. NY: North Point-Farrar, 1990.
 - . The Real Work: Interviews & Talks 1964-1979. Ed. with an intro. by Wm. Scott McLean. NY: New Directions, 1980.
 - . Regarding Wave. NY: New Directions, 1970.
 - . Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems. 1959. San Francisco: North Point, 1990.
 - . Turtle Island. NY: New Directions, 1974.
- Snyder, Gen. "What I Have Learned." Halper 142.
- Sontag, Susan. "The Pornographic Imagination." Styles of Radical Will. NY: Farrar, 1969. 35-73.
- Soulé, Michael E. and Gary Lease, eds. Reinventing Nature?: Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction. Washington, DC: Island, 1995.
- Spiegelman, Willard. The Didactic Muse: Scenes of Instruction in Contemporary American Poetry. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1989.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "In a Word." Interview with Ellen Rooney. 1988. The Essential Difference. Ed. Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed. Books from differences Ser. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994. 151-84.
- . In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics. NY: Routledge, 1988.
- Spretnak, Charlene. "Introduction." Spretnak xi-xxx.
- , ed. The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power within the Feminist Movement. NY: Anchor-Doubleday, 1982.
- Stafford, William. "Traveling Through the Dark." 1960. Contemporary American Poetry. 4th ed. Ed. A. Poulin, Jr. Boston: Houghton, 1985. 509-10.
- Steuding, Bob. Gary Snyder. Boston: Twayne, 1976.

- Suleiman, Susan Rubin. "Pornography, Transgression, and the Avant-Garde: Bataille's Story of the Eye." The Poetics of Gender. Ed. Nancy K. Miller. Gender and Culture Ser. NY: Columbia UP, 1986. 117-36.
- Timberg, Scott. "Rock Lit Goes Legit: Hozomeen puts the Lollapalooza crowd in print." Boston Phoenix 10 Nov. 1995: sect. 3: 11.
- Todd, Judith. "On Common Ground: Native American and Feminist Spirituality Approaches in the Struggle to Save Mother Earth." 1981. Spretnak 430-45.
- Trussell, Denys. "The Arts and Planetary Survival." Ecologist Sept./Oct. 1989: 170-76; Jan./Feb. 1990: 4-8.
- The Unicorn Tapestries. ca. 1500. The Cloisters/Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- Vance, Linda. "Ecofeminism and the Politics of Reality." Gaard 118-45.
- Waage, Frederick O., ed. Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Methods, Resources. NY: MLA, 1985.
- Warman, Janet Lee. "'Voices the Heart Can Hear': From Silence to Voice in the Poetry of Mary Oliver." Diss. U of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1990.
- White, Daniel R. "Literary Ecology and Postmodernity in Thomas Sanchez's Mile Zero and Thomas Pynchon's Vineland." Postmodern Culture 2.1 (Sept. 1991): 40 pars. Online. Internet. 15 May 1995.
- White, Lynn, Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." Machina ex Deo: Essays in the Dynamism of Western Culture. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968. 75-94.
- Williams, David R. "Critics in the Wilderness: Literary Theory and the Spiritual Roots of the American Wilderness Tradition." Weber Studies 11.3 (Fall 1994): 120-30.
- Wilson, Alexander. The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992.
- Wilson, Edward O. The Diversity of Life. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1992.
- Wilson, Matthew Thomas. "A. R. Ammons, Theodore Roethke, and American Nature Poetry." Diss. Rutgers U, New Brunswick, NJ, 1978.
- Winkler, Karen J. "Inventing a New Field: the Study of Literature About the Environment." Chronicle of Higher Education 9 Aug. 1996: A8-9+.

Wordsworth, William. Selections. 1800. English Romantic Writers. Ed. David Perkins. San Diego: Harcourt, 1967. 265-66.

Wyatt, Jean. "Giving Body to the Word: The Maternal Symbolic in Toni Morrison's Beloved." PMLA 108 (1993): 474-88.

Wyatt, Thomas. Selections. ca. 1530. The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Ed. M. H. Abrams. 6th ed. Vol. 1. NY: Norton, 1993. 438-50.

Yaeger, Patricia. Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing. NY: Columbia UP, 1988.

Zwinger, Lynda. "Blood Relations: Feminist Theory Meets the Uncanny Alien Bug Mother." Hypatia 7.2 (Spring 1992): 74-90.