



## PURITY AND POLLUTION

### Racial degradation and environmental anxieties

*Jake Kosek*

It is not just the wood and soil or other resources that we are interested in preserving and protecting - it is something more, something deeper ... it is the integrity, vitality, and purity of the wilderness that we want to maintain.

(Bryan Bird, Forest Guardians')

Wilderness is something that is entirely a white man's invention; it is not something I relate to ... it is something that I have a deep reaction against. We have a close tie to the land - I have lived on and worked on and lived off this land my whole life. They just don't get it.

(Ike DeVargas, land grant activist<sup>2</sup>)

#### ENVIRONMENTALISM'S TROUBLED (AND TROUBLING) "HEART OF WHITENESS"

One spring morning in Santa Fe, while conducting his morning tasks at the office of the Forest Guardians, a staff member went outside to retrieve the mail. Inside the mailbox, he found more than membership applications: carefully placed atop the letters was a large pipe bomb packed with ball bearings. The bomb's fuse had been inserted into one end of a filterless cigarette; it was evident that the cigarette had been lit, but had gone out a quarter of an inch before its embers would have reached the tip of the fuse. Sergeant Tom Stolee of the Santa Fe Police Department's bomb squad said that had the bomb exploded, it would have blown the Guardians' door off its hinges and killed any pedestrians within twenty feet. Two days later, the Guardians found an envelope in the [mail: on](#) the enclosed sheet was a drawing of a rifle scope's cross hairs over the words "Forest Guardians" and "see-ya" written underneath. It was signed "MM - the Minute Men" (Neary 1999: C3).

Sam Hitt, President of the Forest Guardians, considered it another case of what he termed "Green hate," and vowed that their mission to ensure the "protection

and restoration of wild places will not be compromised by such cowardly acts" (Hitt 1999). The Guardians' then-executive director John Talberth said he was "not surprised," noting that "it's one small step from killing old growth forests and spotted owls to killing people" (Lezon 1999a: A2). Then-board member Charlotte Talberth pointed an accusing finger at Chicano activists like DeVargas, Santiago Juarez, and their supporters for "fomenting the hatred" that led to the bombing. She pointed to an all-day meeting the week before, held by officials and activists from Northern New Mexico's rural counties. They had come together to discuss their opposition to the Forest Guardians' regional plan for "rewilding" the southern Rockies, from southern Colorado to Northern New Mexico. The Minute Men were never identified, and neither were the parties involved in the attempted bombing. But this did not mark the first threat of violence to the Forest Guardians; in fact, they had received numerous threats before this event, and received more afterwards. One activist told me: "The only surprising thing about the bomb attempt on the Guardians is that it has not happened earlier."<sup>3</sup>

What is most interesting about the incident is that the potential culprits spanned the spectrum from radical Chicano activists to conservative property rights' advocates. In fact, many environmentalists theorized - without a shred of evidence - that the two factions had colluded in the coordination of the attack (Talberth, C. 1999). The dim view of local Chicanos was nothing new. Many members of the environmental community, including members of the Sierra Club, Forest Watch, the Forest Council, and the Forest Protection Campaign, had repeatedly expressed confusion and frustration over why they could not forge any significant alliances with Hispanics from Northern New Mexico. George Grossman of the Sierra Club put it this way: "I am not sure why we [environmentalists] get the brunt of so much hatred - we really should have a lot in common [with Chicanos]" (Grossman 1999). Others such as John Talberth felt that "the people of Northern New Mexico have been manipulated by a few extremists; in reality we (Forest Guardians) are their real allies; we have the same interests as they do" (Talberth and Talberth 1999). Talberth went on to write in a newspaper editorial, that "[t]he protesters [against the Forest Guardians] are tragically deluded as to who their real enemies are - the advocates for big industry and the Forest Service, who have consistently ignored the needs of small communities" (Talberth and Talberth 1999). Sam Hitt concurred: "They don't have the right enemy.... They are just throwing punches and not knowing where they are landing.... There are no real conflicts between the needs of rural communities and the goals of environmentalists" (Hitt 1999).

In what follows, I explore the notion of wilderness, the bitter responses elicited by its proponents, and its relationship to historical forms of whiteness. More specifically, I examine how notions of wilderness have been infused with racialized notions of purity and pollution.<sup>4</sup> Using links between contemporary New Mexico and the rise of particular racialized notions of nature around the turn of the twentieth century, I investigate how the movement to protect forests from degradation and pollution in that region draws on national metaphors regarding

the contamination of pure white bodies and unsoiled bloodlines. I trace the entanglement of eugenicist conceptions of bodily purity with wilderness protection, and demonstrate how past formations of whiteness articulate with current struggles over wilderness in New Mexico. And finally, I argue that local Hispano activists' animosity towards environmental groups espousing strict preservation of forests is not so mysterious as it may seem to some environmentalists: it has very much to do with the ways in which forest preservation activities are haunted by exclusionary rhetoric of purity and entrenched fears of racial pollution.'

Most often, the history of the environmental movement is traced to either abusive land practices at the turn of the twentieth century, greater scientific understanding of "natural" processes, or the rise and expansion of modern enlightenment thinking into nonhuman realms (Hays 1959; Nash 1967). Even more progressive critiques of capitalism have become part of some wilderness advocates' rationale for the protection of "wild" spaces. These histories have clearly contributed to the development of the wilderness movement, but current battles within it point to a still greater diversity of origins.<sup>6</sup> From among those, I want to call into view an estranged ancestor: the movement for white racial purity, a specter of environmentalism's past that is hardly acknowledged, yet rarely, if ever, entirely absent. For as others have pointed out, while wilderness is a concept that by definition runs counter to modernity and politics, it is, in truth, a product of both (Cronon 1996; Neumann 1997; Spence 1999).<sup>7</sup> It carries with it complicated inheritances that counter its own claims to timelessness and universality. One need only look at the evictions of Native Americans from such icons of wild America as Yosemite, Yellowstone, and Glacier National Parks (among many others) to understand the deep and material contradictions of claims to pure, untouched nature (Solnit 1994; Spence 1999).

These aspects of wilderness have been well explored by others; it is not my intent to rehearse here what William Cronon calls the "trouble with wilderness," nor what his critics call "the trouble with Cronon" (Cronon 1996; *Wild Earth* 1992). Nor do I want to rework the ground that has been so fruitfully cultivated by political ecologists around questions of parks and people, though both are related. I do, however, hope to shed light on the complex relationships between forms of nature and forms of difference, and more practically, to illuminate tensions permeating the environmental movement in New Mexico. Because so much is at stake in these debates I want to be clear: I am not speaking generally about the current environmental movement or all environmentalists; neither am I denying that the wilderness movement has many different origins beyond what I discuss here, including many which are quite progressive. Instead, I mean to unearth some of the wilderness movement's deep and troubling roots, and to invite critical examination of the ways in which the movement - both in its past and in the present - is implicated in the reproduction of racial difference and class privilege.<sup>8</sup>

On another level, my work here is an attempt to broaden the capacity of political ecology to critically engage with, or even place at its analytical core, a

cultural politics of difference. This shift does not simply call for the inclusion of racialized bodies as another variable or factor in a pre-existing frame of analysis. Rather, it proposes that the practices, politics, and effects of racial formation be examined as sites central to the politics of nature. This form of engagement requires three critical moves. First, it entails a treatment of nature as more than a physical environment filled with external landscapes. More than this, nature needs to be understood as a broader and deeper terrain that incorporates internal essences, evolutionary imperatives, and would-be universal Truths. Second, it entails a rejection of assumptions about fixed forms of difference, and instead an exploration of the ways in which nature and the environment are complicit in making and remaking forms of difference, including race. Finally, I maintain that these moves are important precisely because this routing of race through notions of nature has made for dangerous and tenacious couplings, securing technologies of unjust governance, stabilizing relationships between subjects and their assumed, disabling essences, and shaping landscapes, both material and emotional.

The history of the environmental movement stretches far beyond debates between Muir and Pinchot to encompass multiple, deeply political sites wherein nature is produced outside of the realm of the environment. For conceptions of nature are slippery. From their formation in one site, they travel through metaphor and material practice, crossing seamlessly between bodies, souls, universal laws and forests processes, between the species and the individual, all with troubling invisibility and stunning audacity. This approach raises new questions, both about the links between nature and forms of difference, and about the nature of the environment itself. By learning from and integrating insights from critical race theory, political ecology will be better equipped to untangle forms of social difference from biology and treat nature as more than a fixed set of environmental objects, thus allowing its theorists and practitioners to better illuminate the symbolic and material ways in which formations of nature and difference are made and manifest in resource struggles. This reconfigured analytic can do more than enrich political ecology's approach to environmental politics; it can also help to destabilize the universal and timeless ground of nature upon which essentialist ideas of race have been and continue to be built.

This more critical political ecology engages both ethnographic research and critical race theory to address pressing questions of injustice, drawing attention to the fine-grained practices and politics through which racial and class identities are formed, naturalized, and contested within the arena of environmental politics. I hope to show how these entanglements of race, class and nature are manifest both in abstract ideas, such as "wilderness," and in material forms, such as the gunpowder, ball bearings and lead pipes found in the Forest Guardians' mailbox. The divisions between various progressive ideas of the environmental movement are clearly manifest in New Mexico, where longtime environmental advocates typically line up on very different sides of the fence - often reaching across only to grab at one another's throats. The struggle over the environmental movement there is, in large part, a struggle over these different roots.<sup>10</sup>

OF BLOOD AND POWER: "OVERLAPPINGS,  
INHERITANCES AND ECHOES"

[The population of Northern Mexico is] a sad compound of Spanish, English, Indian and Negro bloods ... resulting in the production of a slothful, indolent, ignorant race of beings.

Columbus Delono, congressman from Ohio, 1846  
(quoted in Horsman 1981: 240)

I will begin by looking in greater depth at historical notions of purity in relation to race, first in a broader sense, and then more specifically as these relationships have played out in the wilderness movement over time in New Mexico. I do not intend this to be a comprehensive genealogy of race in the United States., nor do I claim that all forms of race are inherently the same. My intent here is to outline how racial discourses - especially notions of racial purity and improvement - articulate with formations of nature. And I hope to show how fears of the dilution and degradation of race - in particular, of forms of whiteness - became entangled with fears of the degradation of New Mexico's "pristine" forest landscapes. My claim here is that discourses of purity placed diluted racial subjects and degraded landscapes into the same "grid of intelligibility," wherein understandings of and fears surrounding race at the turn of the twentieth century became the raw substance out of which wilderness as an idea and a landscape was forged (Foucault 1978). Moreover, these fears of bodily pollution folded into new formations of "wild" landscapes at a particularly tense moment in American history: former slaves were emancipated and migrating, immigration was rapidly rising, and the protection of a white, masculine notion of nationality.. had become a central preoccupation.<sup>12</sup> Notions of wilderness and its importance to the nation must be understood within this temporal and spatial context.

The notion of protecting or maintaining the purity of a racially exclusive national body politic has long been central to American nationalism. From the first naturalization laws in 1790 limiting the privilege of citizenship to "free white persons," to the nineteenth century's Chinese Exclusion Act, to California's Proposition 187 in the late twentieth century, this country's history is riddled with legislated racial exclusion and definition. Regardless of contemporary mythmaking about the nation's longstanding multiracial identity, numerous battles have been fought - some, ongoing to this day - to preserve and reproduce this nation's white racial "character." \_ When President Theodore Roosevelt considered the weakening of whites' "strong racial qualities" and the declining population among whites amid rising immigration to be "race suicide," and when President Coolidge, upon signing the 1924 Immigration Act drastically limiting immigration into the United States, stated that "America must remain American," each echoed deep-seated fears of racial degradation (Bederman 1995).

Many scholars have noted that racial discourses have hidden attachments (Almaguer 1994; Cosgrove 1995; Hall 1986a; Roediger 1991; Ware 1992). But

by which to sustain the health and life of both the individual and the entire population. As Foucault argued, in this new formulation, the war of the races changes shape to become a racism that "society will practice against itself, against its own elements, against its own products; it's an internal racism - that of constant purification - which will be one of the fundamental dimensions of social normalization" (as quoted in Stoler 1996: 67). Stoler points out that this understanding makes racism:

more than an ad hoc response to crisis; it is a manifestation of preserved possibilities, the expression of an underlying discourse of permanent social war, nurtured by the biopolitical technologies of "incessant purification." Racism does not merely arise in moments of crisis, in sporadic cleanings. It is internal to the biological state, woven into the weft of the social body, threaded through its social fabric.

(Stoler 1996: 69)

Foucault sees these new forms of racism as rebuilding the previous symbolics of blood, spawning new, biologizing forms of racism (Foucault 1978). Foucault takes some of the most significant of these to be the modern forms of racism that arose in the second half of the nineteenth century: the science of eugenics, and one form of its state expression, Nazism, which attempted to cleanse the German national body by exterminating individuals and populations that it understood as pollutive threats. Foucault traces this modern racism back to seventeenth-century beliefs that the social body was divided into two separate, warring races. He posits that nineteenth-century bourgeois class anxieties were constructed according to this racial grammar, spawning the call to cleanse and purify the social body of these threats. Efforts were made to differentiate the social into natural or biological orders of race, caste and descent lines. The rise of new forms of intervention surrounding the body and everyday life found expression at the level of health and hygiene which, he notes, indicates another effort to protect the vitality and purity of race (Foucault 1976).

#### WILD NATURES: THE MAKING OF A TRUE-BLODED AMERICAN

Like the links between nation, blood, and body, the connections between nation and "wild" nature in America are anything but arbitrary, simple, or benign. Perhaps the most influential origin story of American nationalism grows out of these persistent connections. In 1893, Fredrick Jackson Turner delivered his famous paper "The Significance of the Frontier in the Building of American National Identity" (Turner [1898]1994: 61). His basic premise, in this paper, is that the confrontation between civilization and the wild, demanding frontier, transformed the fundamental character of Americans as a people, transforming

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them into strong individuals with a propensity for democratic principles of governance. It was not just any immigrant that Turner had in mind; implicit in his frontier thesis is the transformation of English and German "stock" into a new, Anglo-Saxon, fundamentally masculine, American stock.

Speaking of the frontiersman, Turner states that "[l]ittle by little, he transforms wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe, not simply the development of Germanic germs ... here is a new product that is American" (Turner [1898]1994: 35). What drove these white explorers? Turner, directly echoing the rhetoric of manifest destiny, quotes Grand's famous essay on America, positing that "it appears then that the universal disposition of Americans to emigrate to the western wilderness, in order to enlarge their dominion over inanimate nature, is the actual result of an expansive power which is inherent in them" (Turner [1898] 1994). According to Turner's treatise, the "Americanization" of the European, or at least a particular class of European, takes place in the western "wilderness," which is itself made "American" by free white men - not by former slaves migrating West after abolition, nor by Chinese laborers, nor Mexican sheep herders, all of whom significantly transformed western landscapes (Turner [1898] 1994).

Turner imagined that the nation's strength came from its wilderness and argued that "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development" (Turner [1898] 1994). Turner also claimed that "the frontier is gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history," and "a great historical . movement" (Turner [1898]1994: 56). The closing of the frontier, Turner feared, signaled an end to Americans' conquering spirit. What, he worried, was going to test and distinguish Americans as a people if the very material and forces that formed American identity ceased to exist? The anxiety over the closing of the frontier came at a moment of great transition in American society, and Turner's words resonated with an anxiety about the character and boundaries of racial dominance in America. The closing of the frontier meant the loss of wilderness, which in turn implied the loss of the site in which white American masculinity had been produced - and with it, the "superior" institutions and civility through which the nation had been constituted.

This anxiety over the protection of national and racial superiority is especially visible in the context of immigration. From the late 1880s through 1914, the United States experienced one of its largest influxes of immigration, reaching almost 1.3 million people in 1907 alone. Between 1870 and 1920, over 26 million people migrated to the United States (Jacobson 2000). Not until the 1980s would an equal number of people enter the nation in one year (Cosgrove 1995: 34). So deep were anti-immigrant fears that President Theodore Roosevelt campaigned against birth control among Anglo-Saxons, believing that the overwhelming numbers of non-Anglo-Saxons would diminish the quality and quantity of the superior "native American stock" (Graves 2001: 129). Similarly, the young Woodrow Wilson commented on biological threats to Anglo institutions that stemmed directly from an increasing influx of immigrants,

whom he described as hailing from "the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence" (Graves 2001: 131).

Fear of contamination by immigrants led to direct conflict with the desire to create an immigrant "army of surplus labor." This tension resulted in a paradox: immigration took place, but so, too did the segregation of those same immigrants. Laws preventing Chinese from testifying in court, the exploitation of sharecroppers in the South, and later the *bracero* program, which imported Mexican immigrant laborers without offering them basic human rights - all these became means by which to contain racial difference within the national body, while at the same extracting labor and profits from immigrant bodies. If immigrants had to be part of the means by which the national body could extract profit, then internal forms of differentiation and a means of protecting the nation had to be developed. Many tensions are at play here; at this point it is enough to note that during the early twentieth-century wave of immigration, many AngloSaxons were as concerned about the mixing of the races - something they believed would lead to a less pure nation - as they were of the immigrants themselves.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE SCIENCE OF DESTINY AND THE "GREAT WHITE MISSION"

These racialized fears found some of their strongest articulation and legitimation within the language of science. Theories of polygenesis - which posited that different races had, in fact, different origins - were the most widely accepted theories of racial difference at the time. Indeed, tensions over theories of polygenesis revolved not around the argument that non-Anglo races were inferior but rather their potential challenges to the biblical genesis story.<sup>16</sup>

Nineteenth-century race theorists Dr. Josiah Nott and Egyptologist and professional lecturer George Gliddon drew off the work of prominent scientists, ethnologists, evolutionary biologists and phrenologists, asserting that "a long series of well-conceived experiments has established the fact that the capacity of the crania of the Mongol, Indian and Negro, and all dark-skinned races, is smaller than that of the pure white man. And this deficiency seems to be especially wellmarked in those parts of the brain which have been assigned to the moral and intellectual faculties" (Horsman 1981: 131). Nott goes on to claim that: "everything in the history of the Bee shows a reasoning power little short of that of a Mexican" (Horsman 1981: 131).<sup>17</sup> His sentiments about racial purity reflected ones that were becoming deeply entrenched in the mid- to late-1800s. Fears abounded that pure strains of Aryan blood would be polluted, thus weakening the nation. Nott explained that "[t]he adulteration of blood is the reason why Egypt and the Barbary states never can again rise, until the present races are exterminated 'and the Caucasian substituted" (Horsman 1981: 130). This scientific naturalization of racial difference helped to create not just the idea of a hierarchy among races, but something on the order of "natural" distinctions

among races that could not be changed. Dr. S. Kneeland wrote, in an introduction to the 1852 English version of Darwin's *The Natural History of the Human Species*: "the dark races are inferiorly organized, and cannot, to the same extent as the white races, understand the laws of nature" (Horsman 1981: 134).

Debates about Darwin's ideas of natural selection and species diversity and their relationship to race are far too involved to engage in detail here, but they warrant brief comment. More than any other theory, Darwin's theory of evolution (written in 1860) became deeply intertwined with racial debates, and anchored even more firmly in the popular imagination this conception of race as a subset of naturalized hierarchies of difference. Intentionally or not, Darwin both drew from and contributed to debates about race. And while his position directly countered ideas about the polygenesis of the human race, it opened the door for new ways of understanding racial difference. Herbert Spencer, Ernst Haeckel and members of the rising eugenics movement in the United States were deeply influenced by Darwinian concepts, as well as by Mendelian theories of heredity in farm animals. Both were harnessed to explain a wide variety of moral, intellectual and social traits in humans, including poverty, patriotism, and of course racial difference."

### EUGENICS: PURIFYING AND PROTECTING NATURE

Francis Galton, preeminent British scientist and cousin of Charles Darwin; coined the term "eugenics" - meaning "good in birth" - in 1883 (Selden 1999). Galton believed in the genetic superiority of the British ruling class - thus, he reasoned, their leadership and economic position - and he became a popular advocate of selective breeding in the late 1860s, long before the term eugenics appeared. Though the tenets of eugenics had their roots in earlier ideas of race, the rise in production of "scientific" knowledge regarding racial difference found its traction at this junction where new theories of evolution mixed with the burgeoning field of genetics and deepening anxieties concerning racial degradation. Galton's notions borrowed from and contributed to work in the United States, and, by the turn of the century, eugenic theories of social behavior underpinned the "common sense" understanding of racial difference and provided the legitimating authority for a whole host of new policies and social programs. In fact, at the turn of the century, eugenic theories found transpolitical support - from conservatives to progressives to libertarians - and were deployed in immigration reform, sterilization programs, marriage laws, health policies and segregation programs.

Organizations such as the American Eugenic Society, the Galton Society, the American Breeders Society, and the Immigration Restriction League were formed to guide and implement immigration and population control policies in the United States. Prominent eugenicist and avid naturalist Charles Davenport was recruited to lobby Congress on immigration issues.' With the help of the Carnegie Institute and the Rockefeller Foundation, Davenport founded the prestigious research institute at Cold Spring Harbor to "investigate and report on

heredity in the human race, and emphasize the value of superior blood and the menace to society of inferior blood" (Spence 1999: 4). Davenport was extremely successful at persuading Congress, the Surgeon General and other officers within the US Public Health Service and the Department of Education to align with the eugenics movement. He actively published articles on the importance of eugenics, using it to support immigration restriction and population controls. The results helped make eugenics a key public health issue and brought it to the center of education policies. As L.K. Sadler declared to the Third International Congress of Eugenics: "The stocks which carry the germ plasm of leadership, talent and ability must be nurtured and increased; better babies must be the watchword ... the race must be purified" (Selden 2001: 22). Explicit in Sadler's and others' arguments are fears of contagion and pollution of blood purity, the rise of "social inadequacies" due to improper breeding, and the increased social burden on a nation yoked into supporting genetically inferior races. Eugenicists were able to exploit historically resonant fears of impurity and convince Congress that the "American" gene pool, originating with the Puritans themselves, was being polluted by defective germ plasm and creating a growing number of a genetically inferior American "stock." As a direct result, Congress passed the 1921 Immigration Act.<sup>20</sup> President Calvin Coolidge made the law's premise explicit when he signed the 1924 Act into law: "Biological Law shows that Nordics deteriorate when mixed with other races. »<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the mid- to late-eighteenth century, notions of whiteness and superiority relied deeply on formations of nature. From the natural "destiny" of whites to "manifest" their "innate" tendencies toward western expansion, to the basis of racial difference in the eugenics movement, nature has been central to concepts of racial purity in the United States. It is no coincidence that in this context - one filled with obsession over the purity of bloodlines and the nation's body politic - the wilderness movement was born. It was at the very moment when immigrants were "flooding" the cities, when new epidemics were "infecting" the population, and when the frontier that had supposedly both tested and made white men and their institutions of governance was believed to be "closing" that the early "fathers" of environmentalism, such as John Muir, George Perkins Marsh, Gifford Pinchot and Aldo Leopold, developed and began to propagate concerns over degradation of the natural integrity of pure wilderness.

#### "HIDDEN ATTACHMENTS:" THE PURITY OF BLOOD AND SOIL"

I wish now to suggest that Muir, Leopold, Marsh and other early environmentalists, though they may seem so, were not overtly racist so much as they were creatures of their historical moment. Though many of their writings have troubling, often explicitly racist overtones, these and other men drew from prevailing understandings of and anxieties around race to make environmental

issues intelligible, and their impulse to create and protect national wilderness areas flowed directly from the perceived need to differentiate and protect the "pure" from the "polluted," the "natural," from the "unnatural." The result was that racial and class fears surrounding purity and degradation became a primary means through which wilderness and the environment became discernible. By feeding on the prevailing fears of that particular moment in American history, they galvanized support for wilderness preservation; the importance of maintaining in perpetuity the purity of the nation's environment - the very environment that was said to embody white nationalism and help forge the nation's individual character and institutions - resonated with popular understandings and fears of the nature of race.

When John Muir went into the Sierra to, as he put it, "get their good tidings," he did not just discover the forest through his wanderings; he brought with him his life history as an immigrant Scot who had worked as a laborer and had developed a deep distrust of things modern. On the wanderings that took him to California, he brought the New Testament, Robert Burns' poems, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the writings of Darwin, Whitman, Emerson and Thoreau (Strong {1971} 1988). By the time he embarked on his first summer in the mountains, Muir already carried with him idealized notions of the West, deeply held Judeo-Christian beliefs, and perceptions of the changing condition of the working class, all of which were part of the means through which Muir came to understand landscapes. Muir also packed in with him contemporary fears and attitudes about race that led him to conclude that not everyone belonged in his beloved mountain cathedrals. Muir wrote disdainfully about the "Chinaman" and "Digger" Indian who first set off with him into the Sierra, and about the lack of enlightened appreciation on the part of the Hispanic herders for the majestic grandeur of the mountains. Along with scorn for the "filthy," "lazy" habits and perpetual "dirtiness" of the herders, he also deplored the sheep themselves, calling them "wooly locusts," "dirty," "wretched," "miserably misshapen and misbegotten." (Spence 1999: 23) He saw both the sheep and these men as out of place in the mountains, and placed them all - sheep, Hispanos, "Chinamen," fallen Indians - in opposition to the purity and grandeur of "Nature." He complained that he could not find the "solemn calm" when they were present and described the Indians in Yosemite as "mostly ugly, and some of them altogether hideous." He argued that they had "no right place in the landscape."<sup>23</sup>

The wilderness sanctuaries Muir held so dear were not, as he believed, simply "created by god"; they were created by the US Cavalry, armed with the nineteenth-century authority of manifest destiny. In fact, it was in pursuit of Indians that whites first discovered Yosemite Valley. And it was that same pursuing battalion that finally captured Chief Tenaya on the shores of Pyweack Lake and marched him and his band to a reservation in the flat, hot San Joaquin Valley. Upon the group's capture, the United States soldiers told the Chief that they were going to rename the lake after him "because it was upon these shores of the lake that we had found his people, who would never return to it to live.... His countenance,"

one soldier wrote, "indicated that he thought the naming of the lake no equivalent for his loss of territory" (Solnit 1994: 220). As Rebecca Solnit points out in her essay on Yosemite, it is on this same site that, 25 years later, John Muir camped and wrote of the purity and wildness of the valley: "[Lake Tenaya) with its rocky bays and promontories well-defined, its depth pictured with the reflected mountain, its surface just sufficiently tremulous to make the mirrored stars swarm like water-lilies in a woodland pond. This is my old haunt where I began my studies.... No foot seems to have neared it" (Solnit 1994: 220).

Muir was not opposed to the US Army's presence in Yosemite; in fact, he continued to promote its presence in the valley to keep out perceived undesirables - especially Hispanics and Native American grazers. Muir declared "blessings on Uncle Sam's soldiers! They have done their job well, and every pine tree is waving its arms for joy" (Meyerson 2001: ix). It is likely that he knew of at least some of the occupying Army's past, though he wrote very little about it. Though he depicted it otherwise, John Muir's unblemished wilderness was, in fact, a space of violent, racially driven dispossession, one of a series of removals, massacres and impoverishments that had reduced the Native American population in California from 250,000 to 16,000 within half a century (Ehrlich 2000: 85). These brutal acts created the conditions not only for the "wild" Sierra that Muir and others exalted over so passionately, but also the "solemn calm" they unapologetically experienced there. Indeed, this type of "pure," "natural" space, created by the elimination of Native Americans and others who were deemed to have "no right place in the landscape," became the basis for the National Park system in the United States (Spence 1999: 133).

Muir and many others thus helped create an external nature shaped by internal lines and boundaries that separate pure wilderness from sullied society. Parks and wilderness areas are, in *fact*, monuments to the ideological separation between nature and society. This is not just an abstract separation of nature and culture; this is a particular form of separation reflecting the anxieties, politics and relationships - human and inhuman - of a particular time. Parks and wilderness areas have served as material, naturalized reaffirmations of this spatial separation and those relationships. They are, of course, not fixed; their meanings are the site and source of constantly changing politics. But the meanings themselves are not easily changed. The density with which the social relations of race and class are embedded within these spaces of "pure" wilderness has helped reproduce attitudes about the nature of race and perpetuate the racialization of nature.<sup>24</sup>

#### WILDING SUBJECTS: THE "PURIFICATION MACHINE"

Nature served as a purification machine, a place where people "became white." ... The journey into nature [for purification} was just as much a journey away from something else, and that something else was race."  
(Braun 2003: 197)

Nature's external purity was also celebrated as a catalyst for internal purity. While society degraded the human spirit, and modernity and its trappings polluted both nature and the human soul, the solution, many thought, was to be cleansed by a return to that which is timeless, to nature as it was before humanity's fall, to the "true," pre-social world of wilderness. This process of purification merits more attention, for the creation of such wilderness did more than make nature divinely and racially pure, spatially separate and materially expressed in trees, mountains and rivers. It also created subjects of wilderness. It was, as Braun describes, the "purification machine" that took polluted individuals and helped make them pure again (Braun 2003). The act of going out into wilderness also was and continues to be an act of looking inward. This is perhaps one of the most recurring themes in the argument for wilderness. The formation of individual subjects has also served as one of the central themes of nation building, from as early as Fredrick Jackson Turner's white pioneers creating both country and character. And so the intertwined formation of a nation and its people continues to serve as a central logic for preserving wilderness. Wallace Stegner, one of the most eloquent supporters of the wilderness, wrote this in support of the passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964: "We need wilderness preserved - as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds - *because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed*" (Stegner 1961; emphasis added). This implicit grouping, this trinity of body, nature, and nation, is not accidental or insignificant; rather, it has its origins in the belief in racial salvation through a return to nature.

A tacit assumption of many of these early arguments was that nature's healing capacities, or rather, the ability of whites to benefit from nature's curative powers, depended on the absence of, and distance from, those with darker skin. Braun addresses this rather large caveat: "nature served as a purification machine, a place where people became white." In fact, he argues, "the journey into nature [for purification] was just as much a journey away from something else, and that something else was race" (Braun 2003). This myth of white purification was made more persuasive and insidious by its suggestion that what the wilderness adventurer had to learn was internal and eternal. Because wilderness has been created as a space beyond the social, the wilderness traveler believes he/she is experiencing the essence of nature, pure nature, unpolluted by the social, cultural aspects of society. It is this myth that makes the search for our inner selves so compelling, something to "get back to," a place that serves as a mirror to our own true nature. Of course, wilderness does not underlie our true being any more than nature determines culture. As Donna Haraway observes in *Primate Visions*: "Nature [serves as] the raw material of culture, appropriated, preserved, enslaved, exalted or otherwise made flexible for disposal by culture." She claims that "the appropriation of nature [serves] the production of culture" and acts as a means for the "construction of the self from the raw material of the other" (Haraway 1989: 16).

Muir is just one of many advocates for this kind of natural transformation of the inner self, of finding the soul through the exploration of nature. From Ralph Waldo Emerson to Charles Darwin, Theodore Roosevelt to Edward Abby, Aldo

Leopold to Gary Snyder, the discovery of the self in the supposedly timeless material of nature has served as one of the most dominant themes in western environmentalism. People go to nature to find their "true selves," to "remember" the basis of life. The "call of the wild," is, in truth, nature's hailing. It is a green version of Althusser's famous "Hey, you there," but in this case the interpellating agent is not a state official but a social and political history that is vested in and bound up in the materials of mountain, rivers and forests (Althusser 1971). But because the hailing is outside of humanity, because it is from a "pure" source, the calling goes unexamined and its political histories remain obscured. Thoreau exclaimed:

Give me the ocean, the desert, the wilderness! ... When I would recreate myself, I seek the darkest wood, the thickest and most interminable and ... the most dismal swamp. I enter a swamp as a sacred place, *a sanctum sanctorum*. There is the strength, the marrow, of Nature. The wildwood covers the virgin mould, and the same soil is good for men and trees.... In such soil [civilization] arose and out of such wilderness comes the reformer eating locusts and wild honey.

(Oelschlaeger 1991: 165)

The same theme is present in Aldo Leopold when he exhorts us to "think like a mountain,"<sup>25</sup> or when Muir "discovers" himself in Yosemite, or when hikers come to "find" themselves through the timeless wisdom of nature. Acts of selfdiscovery are, of course, not unique to western subjects; transformations of the self through nature occupy many different traditions far beyond those of western environmentalism. Even in the West, it can be argued that acts of self-discovery by white environmentalists have different purposes and effects; subjectivization, like nature, is contingent and uneven. Many dynamics are at play here; for now it is enough to simply acknowledge the persistent links between individual subjectivity and nature forged through these acts of self-discovery.

Walt Whitman was another believer in nature's role in forming individuals. In *Leaves in the Grass*, he wrote: "Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons. It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth" (Whitman [1860] 1961: 319). But, like Muir, Whitman did not extend this character-building ability to non-Anglo-Saxons. When Whitman was editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in the 1840s, he argued that American expansion and manifest destiny would be good for the whole world. He wrote: "[w]hat has miserable, inefficient Mexico ... to do with the great mission of peopling the New World with a noble race" (Horsman 1981: 235)? He celebrated General Taylor's capture of Mexican territory as "another clinching proof of the indomitable energy of the Anglo-Saxon character" (Horsman 1981: 235). What Whitman and others like him wanted to preserve, evidently, were not just the leaves of grass, but also the physiological and psychological milieu out of which the individual white male was formed in America.

The link between race and nature was even more direct in the work of George Perkins Marsh.<sup>26</sup> In a frightening foreshadowing of Turner, Marsh believed that American government was the product of this mixing of a potent strain of Germanic-Anglo tradition with the wilds of America. In 1868 he wrote: "The Goths are the noblest branch of the Caucasian race. We are their children. It was the spirit of the Goth that guided the May-Flower across the trackless ocean; the blood of the Goth that flowed at Bunker Hill" (quoted in Horsman 1981: 181). For Marsh, nature - both human and environmental - was something that could be controlled, that needed protection and the proper management. It followed, then, that a love of liberty and effective governance were exclusive attributes of the Germanic people (Horsman 1981). Marsh argued that "they [California and New Mexico] are inhabited by a mixed population, of habits, opinions, and characters incapable of sympathy or assimilation with our own; a race, whom the experience of an entire generation has proved to be unfitted for self-government, and unprepared to appreciate, sustain, or enjoy free institutions" (Horsman 1981: 183). At stake for him in these debates is no less than a loss of purity, the decline of the race and the consequent corrosive effect on the white nation.

But Marsh also recognized that the return to nature was not without peril. In words eerily reminiscent of Hitler's, Marsh argued that "if man is indeed above nature, wherever he fails to make himself master [of nature], he can be but her slave" (Marsh (1864) 1973: xxvi). In this formulation, there is a balance: the potential destruction of nature - leading to the further decline of civilization and ultimately to barbarism - is tempered by the fact that nature is manageable by "man." So it follows that we must govern "her," nature, both for the good of nature and of "man." Such arguments allowed Marsh's work to feed directly into the eugenics movement after the Civil War. This need to manage nature fits well with eugenicists' arguments and was widely used by them. They wanted to take nature's evolutionary process, as described by Darwin, and make improvements on it. Those who claimed some knowledge of or control over nature demonstrated, by their own logic, their superiority over those who did not. Thus while the "lesser races" were subject to nature's whims, the "higher races" were able to bend nature and its subjects to their will, for their own good.

Francis Galton, the father of the eugenics movement, made this explicit in his landmark paper in *The American Journal of Sociology*: "What nature does so blindly, slowly and ruthlessly, man may do providently, quickly and kindly" (Galton 1904: 2). Galton, along with a growing group of scientists, politicians and popular supporters, sought to "introduce [eugenics] into the national conscience, like a new religion. It has, indeed, strong claims to become an orthodox tenet of the future, for eugenics co-operates with the workings of nature by securing that humanity shall be represented by the fittest races" (Galton 1904: 2). Darwinian conceptions of nature here are combined with Marsh's vision of a nature that needs to be both protected and managed for the well-being of civilization." The answer to the dilemma was to manage nature more efficiently, more benignly; to protect nature's purity while at the same time developing better subjects through

closer interaction with it. Many pick up on these insights, most notably Gifford Pinchot, who was himself actively supportive of both Marsh's ideas and the eugenics movement. He compared the managing of people's nature to the managing of forest nature, claiming that "only in this way could the forest, like the race, live on" (Guha 2000: 30; Kevles 1985). His models for managing the nature of the forest and the nature of the race both called, at their core, for the proper governance of nature's purity.

"DANIEL BOONEING" AMERICAN HISTORY: THE  
"DARK AND BLOODY REALITIES OF THE PRESENT"

Fears of contagion were expressed by environmental leaders from Muir to Roosevelt to Pinchot and others; all saw immigration restriction as vital to the protection of nature's purity. But these fears are not limited to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; these issues of purity and perceived national threat continue to be at the forefront of contemporary debates around the protection of nature - whether the contagion is national, racial, or environmental.

The Sierra Club's proposed initiative to support California's Proposition 187, which would have defined the Club's position as actively anti-immigration, was a clear relic of these turn-of-the-century fears.<sup>28</sup> Though the Sierra Club measure lost, the massive support it received, including from a number of prominent environmentalists, was very telling. Stewart Udall, Gary Snyder, Dave Foreman, David Brower, Farelly Mowat, Herman Daly and Lester Brown were just a few of the well-known environmentalists who publicly supported the measure.<sup>29</sup>

Edward Abbey, prominent author and modern-day environmental renegade and hero, was probably the most often invoked in the Sierra Club debates over the issue. Abbey wrote: "I certainly do not wish to live in a society dominated by blacks or Mexicans, or Orientals. Look at Africa, Mexico and Asia" (Petersen 1998). He even invoked Garrett Hardin, a neo-Malthusian biologist who developed the infamous "tragedy of the commons" theory: "Garrett Hardin compares our situation to an over-crowded lifeboat in a sea of drowning bodies. If we take more aboard, the boat will be swamped and we'll go under. [We must] militarize our borders (against illegal immigration)}. The lifeboat is listing" (Petersen 1998). He went on to even more directly echo turn-of-the-century eugenicists, stating that "it might be wise for us, as American citizens, to consider calling a halt to the mass influx of even more millions of hungry, ignorant, unskilled, and culturally-morally-genetically impoverished people.... Why not [support immigration]? Because we prefer democratic government, for one thing; because we still hope for an open, spacious, uncrowded, and beautiful - yes beautiful! - society, for another. The alternative, in the squalor, cruelty and corruption of Latin America, is plain for all to see" (Petersen 1998). Abbey's views, as well as those of many others engaged in recent immigration debates,

clearly reflect long-standing conceptions of a pure nature threatened by various forms of racial difference.<sup>30</sup>

Aldo Leopold was still another environmental movement founder indebted to bodily metaphors and to a rhetoric lamenting the degrading national health and its consequences to nature. Like George Perkins Marsh and other predecessors, Leopold believed that nature had to be properly managed for the "good of man" and for its own "well-being" (Leopold [1949] 1987: xxiii). Indeed, Leopold considered wilderness to be the purest and "most perfect norm" and, as such, he believed it "assumes unexpected importance as a laboratory for the study of land-health" (Leopold [1949] 1987: xxiii). We are lost without it, he wrote: "we literally do not know how good a performance to expect of healthy land unless we have a wild area for comparison with sick ones" (Leopold [1949] 1987: 196-7).

Leopold also agreed with Muir that human use of wilderness involved "direct dilution" that "destroys" the "pure essence of outdoor America" (Leopold [1949] 1987: 172-3). However, he allowed himself one caveat. Like Muir and Marsh, Leopold conceived of "wild" nature as central to the formation and/or regeneration of the citizen - or at least, the white male citizen (Leopold [1949] 1987).<sup>31</sup> He argued: "Wilderness areas are ... a means of perpetuating ... the more virile and primitive skills in pioneering travel and subsistence" (Leopold [1949] 1987: 192). The experience of wilderness, he insisted

reminds us of our distinctive national origin and evolution, *i.e.* it stimulates awareness of history.... For example, when a boy scout has tanned a coonskin cap, and goes Daniel Booneing in the willow thicket below the tracks, he is reenacting American history. He is, to that extent, culturally prepared to face the dark and bloody realities of the present.

(Leopold [1949] 1987: 177)

Of course, the "American history" reenacted by the boy scout and revered by Leopold overlooks the "dark and bloody realities" of the past - as well, I believe it is safe to argue, as those of the present. In the boy scout's performance, the theater of wilderness bears no traces of land dispossession, immigrant labor, or slavery. Rather, the celebration of his "Daniel Booneing" reinforces a "purified" white national history, one that relies on nature to bind national citizenship to gender and race.

Indeed, as Robert Finch points out in the 1987 introduction to the reprinting of Leopold's classic compilation, *The Sand County Almanac*: "[N]o idea of Leopold's has been more important ... than his assertion that our encounters with wild nature can reveal, not only interesting and useful observations about natural history, but important truths about human nature" (Leopold [1949] 1987: xxiii). This claim must have seemed almost self-evident to Leopold, given his belief in Americans' "wild rootage" (Leopold [1949] 1987: 177). However, despite his attempts at deciphering these natural "truths," Leopold neglected to grasp the

profoundly political nature of these roots, particularly the fears of the loss, degradation and infirmity caused by social degradation, which was largely defined as a mixing of upper and middle-class whites with those of another ilk.

Ultimately for Leopold and many other conservationists, a healthy landscape, like a healthy body, is the purest one. As I hope the foregoing discussion has suggested, this equation of purity and health, of both land and body, is closely linked to the history of racial struggles over the purity of white bodies as they battle against contamination by unhealthy, impure peoples and nations. Particularly telling are Leopold's metaphors of the human body, metaphors that are no less deeply immersed in national and regional discourses of race than they had been for thinkers a generation or so earlier. When Leopold says that "the evidence indicates that in land, just as in the human body, the symptoms may lie in one organ and the cause in another," and "the practices we now call conservation are, to a large extent, local alleviation of biotic pain," he is tacking back and forth between metaphors - of the nature of the body and the nature of the landscape - that are necessarily grounded within historical and contemporary notions of the bodily health of the individual and the nation (Leopold {1949} 1987: 195). These metaphors are also, interestingly enough, grounded in the debates around race in turn-of-the-century New Mexico, where Leopold, as a young Forest Service ranger, developed the germs of many of his ideas and the country's first wilderness area (Leopold [1949] 1987: 175).

#### NEW MEXICO: GUARDING THE FOREST, PROTECTING THE PURE

The Southwest has been a seedbed for such great visionaries of the environmental movement. I mean, Aldo Leopold, Dave Foreman, Ed Abbey. Look at the people that have come out of this blasted landscape. There is a clarity of vision; there is a singleness of purpose that instills people in the Southwest, and I don't know where that comes from, but it's absolutely part of the landscape.

(Sam Hitt, *Forest Guardians* 2000)

The idea of wilderness we have used is flawed. This flaw is never acknowledged when "white" or urban environmentalists gather because the concept has been driven into us so completely.

(Chelise Glendening 1996)

On 20 April 1999 - Earth Day - I attended a public presentation in Santa Fe organized by the Forest Guardians "to educate and inform people about health and threats to Northern New Mexico Forests" (Hitt 2000). The presentation was one of many events going on that day in Santa Fe, including a tree-planting ceremony, a kids' educational fair - the usual events one might expect to mark the occasion.

The talk was held in Santa Fe's public library, and about 60 people were in attendance, all of whom were white, well-dressed, and seemingly genuinely concerned about forest issues. Three staff members of the Forest Guardians introduced themselves and explained that the Forest Guardians was the most active and most uncompromising of the groups engaged in the protection of the forests. They then began a slide show with an opening image of a plantation: a large white house stood in the background, surrounded by a green, manicured garden.

Bryan Bird, one of the presenters, told the crowd: "These are the true roots of the environmental movement.... When people tell us we must compromise, that we must lower our standards and commitment to the integrity and health of wild forest, we remember that compromise did not end slavery." He added: "it was the Civil Rights movement activists in the 1960s and their discovering the words of Muir and Leopold that launched the modern-day environmental movement." The presentation went on to address broader struggles over the forests in Oregon and Washington, and the civil disobedience techniques that people were using in the struggle for "what is left of the pure and pristine wild spaces of the West." The audience was reminded of the importance of the national campaign for "zero cut" and "zero grazing" on federal lands and the work that the Forest Guardians were engaged in, locally, nationally, and with other groups, to forward these agendas both in public opinion and within federal agencies.<sup>32</sup>

We were then told that in nearby Vallecitos the Guardians had lost a recent battle to stop logging in the area. "The dangers to this area are real; what lies in the balance is the last best hope for the preservation of one of the few remaining unspoiled areas of forest in the region." We were left with a sense that a small island of pure wilderness stood alone against a rising tide of human imposition. The talk ended with a call to not compromise the last free and wild places in the West, and a commitment to "rewilding the West" through the creation of zones and corridors and more open, untouchable areas.<sup>33</sup>

The audience had a few questions. The first came from an elderly woman whom I recognized from a Sierra Club meeting a few weeks before. She asked about how the group was dealing with the "real problems" that underlie the "threat to wild spaces," which she defined as issues of "population control." The speakers nodded as she spoke and did their best to answer the unwieldy question, pointing to the loss of the Sierra Club initiative as a loss for the environment. Bird reassured her that many people were continuing to work on that issue, and that the fight had not been lost. He also pointed out that while population was part of the problem, another factor was also our over-consumption of resources. The woman conceded that "yes, that is true," but reassured that, "to save our resources we need to protect both our borders and our wild lands."<sup>34</sup>

Another question, raised by an elderly man, was a simple one: "Why are the environmentalists so disliked in Northern New Mexico?" A tense moment followed, but the matter was something that almost anyone involved in New Mexico public life, or who even regularly read the newspaper or listened to the

radio, knew to be true. Bird referred back to a controversy surrounding fuelwood collection in the wake of a 1995 injunction to protect the endangered spotted owl,<sup>35</sup> but claimed that the Forest Service had "manufactured the tension" in a "divide and conquer" move "that fractured the possibility of alliances between the community and environmentalists." He also claimed that a few "radicals" like Ike DeVargas and Max Cordova helped stir up the problem, which he claimed was "in fact not as widespread as it seemed." Soon after, the presentation came to a close and small knots of people gathered to talk more individually with the speakers. The event itself was not at all surprising. I had been to many such meetings before, but this was the first time I heard environmentalists claim a direct lineage to the civil rights movement. Indeed, after this event, it became a much more common refrain among environmentalists.

When I recounted environmentalism's newly claimed civil rights heritage to Santiago Juarez, a longtime radical Chicano activist and organizer in the region, the 180-pound man responded: "Yeah ... and I am Snow White." Then he turned serious: "Where the fuck were they during the 1960s and the *La Raza* movement? I didn't see any of them at the marches in Albuquerque. They weren't canvassing for *La Raza Unida* or being arrested by the cops with Corky [Gonzales]. Where were they when we marched against the racist policies and unfair hiring and wage practices at Los Alamos? Where the fuck are they when some white cop pulls me over for nothing?" He finished with an outright dismissal: "They're as tied to the civil rights movement as much as I am part of the Klan." As I sat with him, he got even angrier. His sentiment was not unique; before and since, I heard similar reactions from many others throughout the region (Juarez 1999).<sup>36</sup>

Kay Matthews, one of the editors of the region's radical community newspaper, *La Jicarita*, frames the conflict this way: "You have two of the most progressive environmental justice groups in the West just down in Albuquerque. When was the last time they went down and marched or organized for Chicanos?"<sup>37</sup> Matthews referred to Forest Guardian leader Sam Hitt's claims that the small-time irrigators are the culprits in the water wars in New Mexico, that one major problem is that agriculture uses 90 percent of the water in New Mexico and only about one-third actually reaches the fields. Hitt's position is that locals are using technology from the nineteenth century, a flood irrigation system called the *acequia*, and this is what is causing the degradation of local rivers (Matthews 1999: 3). But Matthews argues correctly that nowhere near that amount of water goes to agriculture and that the water used is central to growing food and maintaining the livelihoods of the people who live in the area and hold legal title to that water - access rights dating back hundreds of years. Matthews asserts: "Sam is fighting to take waters away from the *acequia* for the silvery minnow, calling the *acequia* inefficient. But when was the last time he went down and fought with Intel in Albuquerque over their water use - which is massive - in the production of computer chips? Or when was the last time they addressed white urban sprawl?" (Matthews 1999).<sup>38</sup> Matthews sums it up this way: "You need to judge the Guardians both by what they do and also what they don't...."

It is very telling which struggles they are involved in, who they blame, and which ones they avoid in the region" (Schiller and Matthews 2000).<sup>39</sup>

Though there are many examples of the tensions in New Mexico between commitments to social justice and environmental concerns, probably none make this tension clearer than a public letter entitled "A Letter to Environmentalists" written by Chelise Glendening, who describes herself as a "recovering environmentalist."<sup>40</sup> The letter was published in the *Santa Fe Reporter* in April 1996, after the Federal fuelwood injunction that halted all logging on Forest Service lands. The letter was a small but telling part of the intense controversies that followed in its wake. Glendening knew many people involved in that struggle, including local Chicano activists Ike DeVargas and Max Cordova. Her time with them helped convince her that there was a serious tension within the environmental movement that needed to be addressed. She started the letter by "asking environmentalists to stand behind the politics of indigenous Chicano people 100 percent," claiming that "the idea of wilderness we have used is flawed" (Glendening 1996). She pointed out that "this flaw is never acknowledged when 'white' or urban environmentalists gather because the concept has been driven into us so completely." But, she added, "whenever indigenous people join us, the flaw is quickly pointed out." She writes eloquently about the need to lift the veil and see what is behind what is unquestioningly referred to as "our" efforts at preservation. "Put most simply," she says, "this veil concerns our unthinking use of the word 'we.' 'We' must save the forests! 'We' must build a better world!" She then asks: "How different are these statements from the outlandish manifest destiny rationales used to conquer these lands in the first place?" The rewards of this internal examination, she claims, would be to have "new ideas, new strength, new comrades and, best of all, to understand that 'we' ... is something entirely different from saying it inside the empire" (Glendening 1996).<sup>41</sup>

The letter resonated powerfully with many environmentalists, including members of the Forest Trust and the New Mexico Green Party, and it spawned a number of meetings and teach-ins at the *Offate* Community Center in Espaiiola. Here, at long last, was a respected environmentalist siding with Chicano loggers. Her position was, of course, not surprising to DeVargas or Cordova or many other local loggers who knew her. But because of the position from which she spoke, her letter had powerful repercussions within the environmental community in Northern New Mexico. It also identified a legacy that would later become more apparent, a fracture in the environmental community that would only become wider in the coming years. The initial letter was followed by another, entitled "Inhabited Wilderness." Written by Glendening, along with fellow "recovering environmentalists" Marc Schiller and Kay Matthews, and signed by 75 others who supported an alternative vision of wilder ess, the letter characterized the tension in the following way: "The most recent tragedy to emerge from this injustice is a conflict that is tearing the people of New Mexico apart. On the one side stand the advocates of pure wilderness, working to halt a toxic civilization by isolating areas away from human use; on the other, the Indio-Hispanic communities of the

north, fighting for their lands, livelihood and culture" (Matthews 1999.<sup>42</sup> The letter goes on to pronounce that "we support their {natives' and Indio-Hispanos'} right to sustainable forestry, including community-based logging and restoration, as well as hunting, fishing, herb-gathering, firewood collection, and water. And we honor their right to make decisions about the lands that, according to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, are theirs" (Matthews 1999).

The letter and the subsequent meetings only led to greater animosity toward the Forest Guardians' position. Contrary to what Bryan Bird had claimed at the 1999 Earth Day meeting, the animosity toward environmentalists in Northern New Mexico was very widespread. As a matter of fact, it was one of the few topics on which almost all Hispano locals I met seemed to agree. The shared antienvironmentalist sentiment assumed the status of the weather as an assuredly universal topic of conversation at the post office, at food counters, in parking lots and along the shaded sides of adobe buildings where people gather. It provided the safest conversational gambit because, just as everyone suffers the same deprivations from the weather, everyone shared frustrations about the most recent lawsuit, or overheard statement, or letter to the editor about environmentalists. Though many locals may not have agreed with everything that DeVargas or Cordova or other leaders in the forest struggle did or said, these activists became ever more popular for their vocal opposition to environmentalists in general, and to the Forest Guardians in particular.

One especially contentious encounter took place in August 1996, when members of the Forest Guardians and the Forest Conservation Council hosted a camp-out at the timber sale site in the Vallecitos Sustained Yield Unit.<sup>43</sup> Over the course of three days, the groups organized workshops on bird identification, tree sitting and nonviolent protest techniques. After hearing of the event, DeVargas, other members of *La Compania* (a community based logging organization), and members of the community of Vallecitos all chose to stage their own counterevent to protest against the presence of the environmentalists. After all, although 75 percent of the timber sale had been guaranteed for *La Compania*, the Forest Guardians had forced an injunction to stop the logging. *La Compania* could not begin the logging, and as a result many people had no work (Wilmsen 1997).

Locals claimed that since the Guardians and *La Compania* were involved in litigation over the area, it was "provocative" for the Guardians to have staged the workshops at the timber sale site. Local counter-demonstrators began by hanging John Talberth and Sam Hitt in effigy, as they had in an earlier demonstration in Santa Fe; this time the effigies hung from the trees along Forest Road 274, which led to the timber sale site and the site of the Guardians' workshops. They posted signs that read: "It's not the owl ... it's a way of life that's at stake." When asked if a compromise was possible, Sam Hitt responded: "This stand must be protected," and "my bottom line is that these old growth pines will not be cut" (quoted in Matthews 1999). He claimed that it was simply "culturally irresponsible" to log in the area (Matthews 1999).<sup>44</sup> Eventually, DeVargas and Cordova and others met to discuss their differences with the Guardians, an event which devolved to a

great deal of finger-pointing, followed by heated threats and further discussions. After the incident, DeVargas commented that Guardians' leader Sam Hitt "can no longer portray himself as David fighting Goliath, out to save the poor people against the corporate giant. He has now become Goliath" (quoted in Matthews 1999).

## WILD NATURES AND A NEW WAVE OF COLONISTS

This vision of environmentalists as the new Goliath, a new "wave of colonists," was widely shared by many involved in New Mexico forest politics (DeVargas quoted in Goldberg 1997: 19). The Guardians' choice to use a litigious, one-size-fits-all approach to environmental issues only exacerbated these feelings. As Chelise Glendening claims, there is "a lot of wisdom in the environmental movement, but it has been a mistake to try to disseminate it through litigation" (DeVargas quoted in Goldberg 1997: 21). The legal tactic was effective in stopping largescale logging nationally, but in this region it seemed to exacerbate existing antagonism between the environmentalists and the Forest Service. Yet the community's antagonism toward environmental groups runs far deeper than that of the Forest Service; and in most of my interviews, it did not appear so much in discussions of the Vallecitos Sustained Yield Unit, or even in the specifics of the firewood controversy. Rather, it was clearly articulated in disbelief at the arrogance of the Forest Guardians.

Truchas resident and ex-Reverend Alfredo Padilla said during one firewood gathering trip: "Who the heck do they think they are?... They act like they can send down commandments and that we should all get out of the way or get on our knees for them." (Padilla 1999).<sup>45</sup> He later asked rhetorically: "Who put them in charge of these woods? The Forest *Guardians*? I did not ask them to *guard* these forests. Who are they guarding them for? Not for the people who live here. They are guarding [the forest] so that they can have their own playground" (Padilla 1999).<sup>46</sup> Others, like Sam Cordova, who worked thinning and selling firewood, said: "I do not feel the woods are going to be safer because they are guarding them.... I cannot think of any big er threat to these forests than the Guardians ... all they. are doing is making it sa for people to develop here [in Northern New Mexico]" (Cordova 1999).<sup>47</sup>

In a letter to the *Albuquerque journal* entitled "Green Vision Blind to Native Hardship," three Chicano county commissioners asked: "What right other than conquest do these people [environmentalists] have to develop a vision for our communities or for the lands stolen from us?" (Montoya *et al.* 1997: A15). Referring to the injunction against logging on federal lands, the three added: "The courts have been used to rid the United States of our kind for too long. We will do whatever is required, as individuals and as elected public servants, to defend our country and our people from a sophisticated, treacherous and deceptive attempt at cultural extermination" (Montoya *et al.* 1997: A15).

Both the intent and tone of the editorial are very clear; so, too, are its racial undertones. "Our kind" is vaguely defined here. At times it might be a class reference; it can also be tied to culture and place - but it is most certainly racial. In the preceding paragraph, the letter asks, in reference to the Southwest Forest Alliance (which is made up of 16 environmental groups including the Forest

- Guardians), whether "there is a Hispanic, a Native American, or even an individual raised in Northern New Mexico among them" (Montoya *et al.* 1997: A15)? The answer is, not surprisingly, no. The letter articulates one of the biggest concerns expressed in innumerable meetings, interviews and conversations with local Hispanos. What they find most objectionable is often not the details of environmentalists' claims but rather the claim of the almost all white, largely male contingent to be the singular, rightful voice for nature, and for its protection.

In fact, the Forest Guardians assume this mantle with little equivocation. As Sam Hitt said during an interview: "We might not always be popular, but if we did not look after the forest, who would?" He broadens the rationale to a campaign whose bounds are as noble and inevitable as those expounded by the environmentalists' founding thinkers: "We are doing something bigger than ourselves; we are working to preserve the forest for people who will be living beyond our lifetimes. [We work] to maintain its health and protect its integrity." The best way to do this, according to Hitt and others, is to "keep as much of it as wild and free of degradation as possible" (Hitt 1999).<sup>48</sup>

When I asked Hitt what was at stake for him personally in the preserving wilderness, he said:

When I go out deeper into it [wilderness), I end up going deeper into myself. It does not happen all the time; most of the time I go to the forest and I see problems. I see cows in the wilderness. I see roads that are polluting sediment into streams. I don't see the creatures that should be there.... If you're not sad, you have no right to be alive in the twentyfirst century. You're living inside a cocoon. You're numb. You've lost connection with the wild and you're blind to the incredible ecospasm that's going on, on the planet. It's global suicide, this greatest extinction in 60 million years.... There is something about it {wilderness) which makes us stronger, physically and mentally; it recharges our batteries; it restores our souls.... It is these trips, both the problems and the beauty, that reaffirm my commitment to what I am doing and remind me of why it is so important.

(Hitt 1999)

Bryan Bird expressed a similar sentiment: "Yes, it is about preserving endangered species; yes, it is about protecting old growth forests and maintaining biodiversity. But it is also about reminding ourselves of who we are. The fact is, our inner nature is connected to our outer nature" (Bird 1999).<sup>49</sup> These sentiments express the selfsame notions of pure wilderness espoused by Muir, Marsh and Leopold. It is

this understanding of pristine, non-human nature, as well as these deeply personal, sentimental, and political connections to it, that are at stake in struggles over the forests in New Mexico. It is also this understanding of nature that makes the preservation of its purity and the commitment to its improvement so sacrosanct. This is the key point, the fulcrum on which my argument turns; I am arguing that if it is through this connection to nature that contemporary environmental citizens are formed, and if we accept that nature has deeply racialized roots, then it must follow that the ways that environmental subjects form themselves and their ideologies through nature must be examined more carefully.

This ideological heritage was clearly demonstrated in *The State of the Southern Rockies*, a report authored by Bird, along with then-Forest Guardians member John Talberth, and published by the Forest Guardians. Sam Hitt traced the genealogical connection himself, claiming that the report "was an offspring of Aldo Leopold's vision of land health and John Muir's vision of wilderness" (Hitt 1999). The report grew out of a 1996 meeting in which 23 environmental organizations in the region agreed to collaborate under an umbrella organization they would call the Southwestern Wildlands Initiative. It was part of a larger set of initiatives of the Wildlands Project, which hoped to establish an "audacious plan" because, in their words, "North America is at risk" (Talberth and Bird 1998: 4). According to them, this plan is central to the region's survival and recovery. The intent is to create a "vast, interconnected area of true wilderness" by means of a connected system of reserves that span from Panama and the Caribbean to Alaska and Greenland. The plan was most clearly articulated in a special issue of *Wild Earth* dedicated to "Plotting a North American Wilderness Recovery Strategy."<sup>50</sup> The magazine featured articles by EarthFirst! activist David Foreman, poet. Gary Snyder, conservation biologist Michael Soule and many others, all in support of the plan. Foreman goes so far as to call the Wildlands Project plan "one of the most important documents in conservation history," claiming that what its creators "seek is a path that leads to beauty, abundance, wholeness and wildness" (Foreman 1992).

The *State of the Southern Rockies* report claims that, if the region is "managed properly," it will be possible to restore much of the area to its wild state (Talberth and Bird 1998: 9). The authors continually invoke metaphors of a sick and imperiled patient in need of a recovery strategy; they propose to restore natural health to the forest through scientific management and rational planning.<sup>51</sup> Needless to say, given the environment of conflict over the forests in Northern New Mexico, the Forest Guardians' role in producing the plan did little to help it receive favorable reviews.

Among the reviews it did receive was an eloquent letter from land grant activist Max Cordova (Cordova 1999).<sup>52</sup> He stated that he was drawn to write a response because, though "the plan is an abstraction, disconnected from the day-to-day lives of people living in the area ... the Forest Guardians' lawsuits have themselves demonstrated [that] these abstractions are based on objects and issues as real and concrete as the wood in my backyard, the temperature of our

homes in winter and the sovereignty of our lands" (Cordova 1999). Cordova stated that he was concerned that:

the report describes a plan to build a "wilderness," a "land where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man." The plan's prescription to create a "pristine nature" out of a landscape that is deeply related to our history - from the births and deaths of family and friends, to the sweat and labor of our ancestors as herders, hunters, farmers, firewood gatherers, community loggers, acequia members, miners - is deeply disturbing.... These "wildlands" are not wild; they are the products of intensive use dating back hundreds, if not thousands, of years.... The Forest Guardians are not the first to use the notions of wilderness in this way. The concept of an open, unoccupied, "wild" frontier has been the myth that has fueled the dispossession of lands in America for a long time. Whether the planners of this report are conscious of it or not, the report carries on this legacy that empties the landscape and erases our history ... which disingenuously dismisses the past, with disturbing implications for the future.

(Cordova 1999)

Cordova's recollection of racialized dispossession from his ancestors' point of view is powerful. But it, too, needs to be complicated, lest this story appear to be a simple one in which a traditional, rural Hispano group is pitted unfairly against an overwhelming force for national/natural purification, itself driven by a racially haunted past. It is important to interrogate diverse notions of blood, and notions of nature, as much those of local Hispanos as those of environmentalists. Hispanos claim that their land was stolen by the Forest Service, and they invoke claims to blood purity that often seamlessly cross centuries, eliding the brutal histories of Spanish colonialism in America as well as centuries of cross-racial intermarriage. Such claims staked upon the purity of bloodlines enable the possibility for land title restoration, according to the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and yet also implicate the title recipient directly in the legacy of colonial violence. Indeed, blood politics in the region are deeply complicated by histories and contradictions that make simple ideas of Hispano opposition to environmental claims of wilderness and whiteness - while powerfully compelling - less than straightforward. Moreover, still more troubled variations on the narrative of purity and pollution haunt these bodily and natural landscapes. Among the most compelling are the very real fears of radiation pollution from Los Alamos, one of the biggest employers in the region, and the skyrocketing deaths from heroin overdoses that have earned the region the ignominious distinction as the nation's rural heroin death capital. All of which is to say that any investigation of the intersections of environmental politics and blood politics should not end with a critique of the eugenicist roots of environmentalist thought; instead, it might begin there, and move onward.

CONCLUSIONS

We seek the purity of our absence [in nature], but everywhere we find our own fingerprints.

(Richard White<sup>53</sup>)

My argument here has been simple. Tensions that exist around the nature of wilderness in New Mexico (and elsewhere) are deeply rooted in very particular formations of nature - formations that owe much of their shape, size, and even soil structure, to anxieties over the loss of bodily and national purity in mid- to late-nineteenth-century North America. Nature, race, nation, have been intimately and insidiously bound together for well over a century, from Darwin's theories of natural improvement and progression, to Turner's warnings about the closing of the American frontier, to the invention of polygenesis and eugenics to ensure the integrity and health of the middle- to upper-class white populace. Wilderness advocates and other proponents of the early conservation movement, including Muir, Marsh, Whitman, Leopold, and Abbey, were deeply influenced by these intersecting notions and are equally implicated in their disturbing effects. As with Turner, Calhoun, Galton, Davenport, Haeckel, Grant and so many others before (and after) them, the efforts of these men to protect the purity of nature were intertwined - whether explicitly or implicitly - with their desire to ensure the strength of their nation, their fellow citizenry, and themselves. Nature thus became a social template that needed to be "guarded" - kept or made pure - not only for its own sake, but for the good of the nation and select, deserving individuals within it.

The conception of nature as always-already pure and yet in continual need of purification - in need of protection from the ever-threatening elements which "have no right place in the landscape" - continues to trouble the contemporary environmental movement. This is not to say that every reference to wilderness is bound to historical formations of race, class, and nation in the same way; wilderness draws off of many forms of knowledge, from Judeo-Christian traditions

to Enlightenment thought. However, as long as racial histories remain hidden, racist and racialist practices will continue to find some form of expression; and efforts at environmental protection will continue to be cast as attempts to guard and restore a natural, God-given purity, by the pure, for the pure. I hope to have demonstrated that such efforts must be recognized as more than that. By looking at forest politics in a contentious corner of the Southwest, I have tried to illustrate some of the dangers of regarding nature as a pure template for moral guidance. Nature itself has a social history that is anything but pure. Efforts to preserve and restore "wilderness," to create "healthy" forests, and to treat "sick" and "degraded" landscapes are not as simple as they may at first seem.

This article has traced a history of the production and conservation of wilderness to a history of the defense of middle and upper class whiteness in America. My central claim is that the environmental movement, particularly as it

pertains to the protection of forest wilderness, is haunted by the specters of its own racist creation. In part, the very meaning and impact of the environmental movement in the United States is at stake. If environmental groups continue to conceive of the debate so narrowly around the question of wilderness as traditionally defined, they will do so at their own peril.

In the battles over the forest in Northern New Mexico, many environmentalists blame local Chicano activists and the "recovering environmentalists" who roused the internal debate within area environmentalist groups for "fomenting the hatred" that led directly to the escalation of tensions there.<sup>54</sup> But the tensions in the region run still deeper. At issue are historically sedimented fears and understandings regarding nature, race, and class, and they are made manifest in material, often violent struggles over the forest. New Mexico and the racially charged forest landscapes that populate it demonstrate that these tensions and their lengthy historical lineages are inescapable and deserve closer, more careful attention.

These spectral pasts are powerfully expressed in contemporary struggles over the forests - in debates over wilderness preservation and in the zero-cut/zerograzing initiatives of the environmental movement in New Mexico. I do not mean to claim that this is the only history that infuses wilderness. Wilderness is, of course, vested with all kinds of anxieties, aspirations and politics. In fact, a part of the wilderness debate has been about how to conceive of wilderness as anything other than simply a landscape of resource production. Next to this, however, there is a reactionary, conservative aspect of wilderness as well, which reasserts itself through such figures as Edward Abbey, David Foreman, Sam Hitt and others.

Some conceptions of wilderness protection have echoed substantial critiques of capitalism. However, these critiques seem to have quieted amid the advent of "green capitalism," which implies that we can "save the environment" while simultaneously saving corporate interests and profit margins, thus maintaining the inequitable distribution of resources and the security of suburban white enclaves. A more critical political ecology would cultivate an awareness of the production of nature and the construction of wilderness and draw out the hidden labors and constitutive silences implicit in the making of wilderness (Cronon 1996; Smith 1984; White 1995). Yet one of the biggest disappointments of the environmental movement has been its stubborn inability to critically examine the politics involved in its own contribution to the formation of the environment itself, as well as the social legacies imbedded and reproduced within the movement's understandings of nature (Braun and Castree 1998). Though recent debates about wilderness and environmental justice have become more widespread, a radical rethinking of wilderness has yet to occur. Most notably, leftist and conservative environmentalists alike continue to deal ineffectively - or not at all - with issues of race as they intersect with questions of wilderness.

I have raised concerns here about spaces of whiteness in federal forest lands in the United States, and challenged what is being protected and perpetuated through these spaces. I hope, however, to have done more than merely point to the

problematic ways in which race, class, gender are linked to environmental politics; I want also to have opened the door for a reconceptualization of wilderness areas and public lands more generally. The fact is, public spaces in the West have too long been defined as white; too few people and ideas have contributed their reconceptualization in broader, more politically engaged ways. What does it mean to remake the notion of wilderness in the United States? What does it mean if nature is not something to be protected, but something that is continually produced? How do "we" begin to remake spaces of nature in ways that make clear the histories present within them, while also forging new ways to openly engage these spaces as alternatively raced, classed and gendered? Northern New Mexico forest politics demonstrate that this process of radically remaking forests landscapes in the United States is an intensely complicated, contentious

one - but one that can, and does, indeed happen.

Ultimately, much more than the environmental movement or the 15 percent of the country that lives in "wilderness areas" are at issue here. More centrally at stake are the notions of nature and its purity that continue to work as a reservoir for "common sense" conceptions of race and for the reproduction of exclusionary logics of racial difference. What is at stake are lived experiences of difference that are naturalized and reproduced through those notions of nature. Given these stakes, the responsibilities and possibilities of environmental politics are even greater than we have yet imagined. NOTES

1 Bird, Bryan (1999). Conversation with the author, Santa Fe, NM, 12 March.

2 DeVargas, Ike, (2000). Interview by the author, Cervieta Plaza, NM, 12 March.

3 Anonymous New Mexico activist, 1999. Interview by the author, Espaiiola, NM, 5 April.

4 This is not to say that the history of wilderness is racist, per se, or that wilderness does not have other histories. I intend here merely to map these hidden genealogies of wilderness and the grounded implications of this history of the movement in Northern New Mexico, and to point to the fact that this history is very much still part of many conceptions of wilderness. "Purity and Pollution" comes from Douglass (1996), but I am using her conception in a slightly different formulation here.

5 I am not saying in any way that wilderness works the same in all places. Neither do I want to imply that all efforts at wilderness preservation in all places carry the same meanings. Ideas of wilderness have many genealogies and articulate differently with the particularities of places, practices and histories. Likewise I am not saying that to work for the preservation of the forest is inherently racist. What I do want to claim is that notions of wilderness and, more broadly, nature, articulate with historical tensions in New Mexico, and that some of these meanings have long, entangled histories with racial formations and anxieties.

- 8 The connections between racial purity and nature's purity have a long history, with many and sometimes contradictory paths, more than I can do justice to here. I attempt only to trace the necessary links between them, not to map the comprehensive, entwined epistemology of nature, race and purity.
- 9 How does knowledge about the human body - its health, contamination, and virility - become the means for understanding the health and well-being of the forests? To understand this claim in relation to the forest, we need to begin with a simple reiteration of the following postulate: the cultural history of the forest is inextricable from the forest itself, from the very material fibers of the wood. That wilderness areas have this social history is the starting point. Second, we must remember that the discourses of forest wildernesses are not produced from the forest alone; rather, they are woven together by the iteration and reiteration of established norms, meanings and understandings. This iterative process is what makes forests intelligible as wilderness areas. The epistemology of wilderness purity may be constructed without specific reference to race, but it is bound to turn on references to notions of purity that conform to established norms regarding race. These meanings of wilderness, of course, can drift, be contested and remade. Likewise they can serve to reproduce racialized ideas of difference without intention and without direct reference to forms of difference. As a result, notions of wilderness that arose in the late 1800s and early 1900s were governed by regulatory norms and anxieties that function even in the absence of their explicit articulation. I'm grateful to Bruce Braun for conversations related to the development of this point.
- 10 The environmental justice movement is the only aspect of the contemporary environmental movement to truly engage difference. The environmental justice movement has shaken the foundations of the "old school" environmental movement, forcing some of its adherents to reexamine their own practices and assumptions. To date, the environmental justice movement has concentrated almost exclusively on the inequitable access to resources or disproportionate exposure to hazardous pollution based on race or class difference. This work has radically changed approaches to environmentalism, especially in relation to pollution and health. But the roots of race questions lie still deeper. Scholars have scrutinized the racially charged statements of individuals such as Muir, Thoreau, Pinchot and others, but those critics too have stopped short of exploring the *origins* of the ideas behind these statements and the ways in which these origins continue to shape environmental agendas. The few who have tried to understand the colonial or JudeoChristian traditions as they manifest in the notion of wilderness have indeed opened new ways of understanding the familiar logics of these claims. However they have continued to treat wilderness as a coherent, homogeneous, universal concept in which lived and contested formations are rarely - if ever - situated in specific times and places. My work here seeks to build off these insights by exploring the roots of notions of wilderness while also examining how they articulate and are lived within a particular time and place.
- 11 Foucault (1978).
- 12 Of course, the threat here is to the formation of a white masculinized notion of nationality. These developments were not threatening to others, except in that the reproductions of the fear led to some of the darkest and most violent incidents in American history.
- 13 Nowhere was the notion of "manifest destiny" more explicitly expressed than in the Mexican-American War. Given the widely accepted belief that it was the destiny of this white nation to reach "from sea to shining sea," the idea of annexing a territory with a large Mexican population was deeply troubling to many in the United States (Horsman 1981). Ironically, the debate over whether or not to get involved in the Mexican-American War was fought largely between those who thought that it was "our" mission, a nationally shared burden, to civilize the Mexican race, and those who feared what the mixing of races would do to the national character. Senator John C. Calhoun put it this way: "Can we incorporate a people so dissimilar from us in every respect - so little qualified for free and

- popular government - without certain destruction to our political institutions?" Calhoun directed his words to those who felt it was Americans' duty to spread civil and religious practices across the continent, stating that "{w}e have never dreamt of incorporating into our Union any but the Caucasian race - the free white race." (as quoted in Horsman 1981, 241). The Mexican-American War at mid-century, coupled with growing tensions over slavery, placed the racial question at the heart of scholarly discussion; nineteenth-century American theorists and popular writers were deeply engaged in defending the innate differences between races and warned of the dangers of mixing blood between races - both at the level of the individual body and within the body of the nation.
- 14 See McClintock (1995), Stoler (1995); Young (1995). For notions of cultural intelligibility, see Butler (1993). For a discussion in relationship to nature, see Braun (2000).
  - 15 Deep fears of "the enemy within" resonate strongly with contemporary fears of domestic terrorism in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, a time in which anxieties regarding not only the external "other" but imagined internal threats to the national body have led to calls for the purging of "alien elements" and re-affirmation of the narrow boundaries of the nation. This has been clearly illustrated by the increase in violence towards Muslims in the wake of the attacks. It is also important to note that, even in efforts to include Muslims into the national body, the terms on which Muslims are included - that is, what constitutes acceptable behavior and what is suspect - are tightly bound within the liberal norms of western national rationalities.
  - 16 For example, W.G. Ramsay from South Carolina wrote two articles in the *Southern Agriculturalist* in 1839 in which he argued, "We are almost tempted to believe that there must have been more Adams than one, each variety of colour having its own original parent." (As quoted in Horsman 1981, 141). Abetted by the popularizing zeal of Josiah Nott and George Gliddon, Agassiz and Morton helped the scientific postulations behind theories of polygenesis become widely accepted. In an influential book first published in 1852, *Types of Mankind*, Nott and Gliddon took these theories to one of their seemingly natural conclusions, proclaiming whites as the carriers of civilization (Horsman 1981). They wrote: "The creator had implanted in this group of races an instinct that, in spite of themselves, drives them through all difficulties, to carry out their great white mission of civilizing the earth. It is not reason, or philanthropy, which urges them on; but it is destiny" (Horsman 1981). By conquering the globe and, in particular, expanding westward, they reasoned, Caucasians were "fulfilling a law of nature" (Horsman 1981, 136). The overriding message of *Types of Mankind* was that superior races would make the world a better place by exterminating, or at least governing, the inferior races that stood in their way.
  - 17 Nott drew specifically off the work of the influential ethnologists Dr. Samuel Morton and Dr. George Combe, phrenologist Dr. Charles Caldwell, and many others. (Horsman 1981)
  - 18 Spencer's earlier work also influenced Darwin's own thinking. See Spencer (1855), *The Principles of Psychology*, for his early ideas of evolution. He and nine other well-known British intellectuals formed Club X to discuss Darwin's ideas.
  - 19 He later became president of the American Breeder Association, and director of Cold Springs Harbor.
  - 20 These efforts echo German eugenic projects taking place at the same time. In fact, Germany directly mirrored American sterilization programs, the Immigration Act, and the research at Cold Springs, which the American eugenics movement had developed for the creation of its own "racial hygiene movement." In fact, Davenport and leading German eugenicist Eugene Fisher (whom Hitler relied directly upon in *Mein Kampf*) were such close colleagues that Davenport asked Fisher to take over as chair of the International Federation of Eugenics organization when he stepped down. Nazi and US notions of race are in fact far more closely linked than is often acknowledged.

- 21 These were President Calvin Coolidge's comments as he signed the 1924 Immigration Act. See "A Science Odyssey: People and Discoveries: Eugenics Movement Reaches Its Height." By 1915, the rise of the eugenics movement had helped spawn anti-miscegenation laws in 28 states, invalidating marriages between "Negroes and white persons;" six of those states went so far as to write this prohibition into their constitutions. For example, Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924 warned of the "dysgenic" dangers of mixing the blood of different races. The law declared that: "it shall thereafter be unlawful for any white person in this State to marry any save a white person, or a person with no other admixture of blood than white." (Source: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aso/databank/entries/dh23eu.html>.) These very sentiments are frighteningly parallel to those echoed in Nazi Germany 20 years later. Dr. Gerhard Frey, founder of the German People's Union and Nazi activist, similarly stated in 1933 that: "Germany should remain German."
- 22 I borrow the notion of "hidden attachments" from an essay by Dennis Cosgrove (1995). Cosgrove's argument is similar to mine here, in that he also finds race a hidden attachment to contemporary environmentalism.
- 23 Indeed, modern notions of wilderness were not created in a vacuum, and did not simply emerge self-evidently by virtue of John Muir's or others' wanderings and discovering what was "really" there. Instead, stories of the discovery of pristine wilderness gained relevance and support because they emerged from and addressed prevailing anxieties around the need to protect the purity of the body and of the nation - and not just any bodies, but white bodies, and their associated pure blood. In other words, the term "wilderness" and the meanings conferred to it emerged not through objective observation of a "real," timeless nature, but rather through historical sedimentation of discourses that incorporate notions of race and class. The point here is that meanings of wilderness have not come into the world fully formed; neither have they been simply induced from dispassionate observation of socially disconnected material objects. But these meanings of wilderness are also not produced by the intention of the subject who makes the observations. Rather, these understandings of wilderness connect present acts to prior ones in ways that conform to the iterable norms, fears, and understandings of the social and political context in which they are created.
- 24 The opposition of wilderness and modernity was not a gesture of Muir's invention, but his life reaffirmed it and made him a passionate preacher of this divide. While he worked making parts for carriages in his late twenties, Muir stopped to untie the belt of a machine with a file. The file flipped up and hit him directly in the eye. He was convinced that his eye was lost, though it was only partially damaged. However, Muir had to spend four weeks in a dark room to enable it to heal; when he got out he was left with an even greater disdain for machines and factories. The incident helped spur Muir's trip west in search of Yosemite, which he had read about in a small pamphlet. He set out in the "direction by the wildest, leafiest and least trodden way {he} could find." Immediately upon his arrival in San Francisco, he asked a fellow traveler (who was British): "What is the quickest way out of the city?" The traveler asked him: "Where do you want to go?" "Anywhere that is wild," Muir responded. Muir had already found what he wanted well before he arrived in Yosemite, well before he "discovered" true wilderness. What he sought was an Other against which to pit modernity, with which to measure the fall of man from grace. Like transcendentalists before him, Muir found God in nature, and with God on his side, he drew ever more clearly the line between that which was "pure," "cleansing," "light-filled" and true, and that which was "fallen," "degraded," polluted and impure. The "grandeur" of the mountains was on one side, and the "squalor" of the cities and their inhabitants on the other; "God's wild gardens" and their protectors set against the "temple destroyers."
- 25 Muir also wrote an essay about forests called "Thinking Like a Forest."
- 26 Marsh is widely considered the founder of the environmental movement in the United States. He was more than this; he was also a lawyer, a manufacturer, a philosopher, a

- congressman, a diplomat and one of the founders and earliest supporters of the Smithsonian Institute. He was a broad and influential thinker of his day. His most celebrated work, *Man and Nature*, is considered to be the greatest contribution of his life. It is widely seen as the standard-bearer of ecological thinking in this country. Luis Mumford and others considered it to be the "fountainhead of the conservation movement." Gifford Pinchot called it "epoch-making," and more recently, Stewart Udall claimed it to be the "beginning of land wisdom in this country." (Strong 1988, 27, 36)
- 27 Support for Galton's position was broad, spanning the social spectrum from John D. Rockefeller to Emma Goldman. Even noted leftist writer George Bernard Shaw said, in response to Galton's paper "Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims": "I agree with the paper, and I go so far as to say that there is now no reasonable excuse for refusing to face the fact that nothing but a eugenic religion can save our civilization from the fate that has overtaken all previous civilizations." (See Galton 1904, 1996.) With these words, Shaw echoed Marsh and Galton - and amplified - common fears of the decline of civilization in the wake of man's folly against nature.
- 28 The proposition was a central debate within the Sierra Club for over a year, starting in 1998.
- 29 See *The Wild Duck Review* 4, no. I (Winter 1998).
- 30 Here again, articulations of difference become tightly wrapped around the body of nature, both as national landscape and internal marker of an essential identity. As such, the protection and improvement of nature deeply link blood and landscape; the threat of pollution of this body necessitates the proper governance and management of nature for its and humanity's own good. Virile white males step up to protect and improve the body of nature in the face of foreign threats to its purity. This management requires masculinity, science and proper governance.
- 31 Leopold's answer to concerns regarding nature's sickness is proper "husbandry" and a recognition of the value of America's "wild rootage." This "wild rootage" is similar to Muir's notions, as are his ideas of wilderness as the fountain and purity from which humanity has emerged and which humanity must now protect. His attention to the managerial notion of "husbandry" also owes a profound debt to George Perkins Marsh.
- 32 Forest Guardian Earth Day meeting in Santa Fe Public Library, April 2000. I should note here that the zero-cut campaign became renamed the National Forest Protection Campaign.
- 33 Forest Guardians, Earth Day meeting 2000.
- 34 Forest Guardians, Earth Day meeting 2000.
- 35 Locals flouted a federal injunction and "trespassed" on Forest Service land to continue harvesting the fuelwood on which many base their livelihoods. I examine this conflict in more detail below and in a chapter of my dissertation, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico*.
- 36 Juarez, Santiago. 1999. Conversation with the author, Española, NM, 16 February.
- 37 The groups to which Matthews refers are SWOP - Southwest Organizing Project and Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic justice.
- 38 The Intel Corporation in Albuquerque uses over 7 million gallons of water a day in the middle of a desert to produce Pentium chips, and urban sprawl is probably the most threatening process facing the Southwest today. See *Southwest Organizing Project* Web site, <http://www.swop.net/intelinside.htm>.
- 39 Schiller and Matthews (2000). Conversation with the author, El Valle, NM, 3 April.
- 40 Chelise Glendening, Kay Matthews, her partner Marc Schiller, and a handful of other activists have all lived in Northern New Mexico for years, and all of them have at one time or another been intimately involved in environmental struggles. In fact, some of them have even worked with Sam, Hitt in the past. But the impact of living in this area, coupled with their commitment to other issues such as labor rights, racial justice and local sovereignty, have changed how they understand and engage in environmental struggles.

- 41 Glendening (1996). For a complete copy of the letter, see HTTP: <<http://www.lajicarita.org/justice.htm>>.
- 42 The letter "Inhabited Wilderness" was printed in different newspapers; see *La Jicarita News* 1996.
- 43 One of the most recent, intensely public, and long-fought battles over New Mexico's Carson National Forest is the battle over *La Manga* and *Agua Calientes* timber sales - a part of the Vallecitos Sustained Yield Unit, or VSYU. The VSYU was established by the Forest Service in 1948 as one of a number of test sites on federal lands in which the logging and processing of timber are guaranteed for local communities (Goldberg 1997, 15-21; Wilmsen 1997). In most cases, the Forest Service policy is to present a timber sale for competitive bid; in the case of the VSYU, the Forest Service awards a bid to a lumber company at the timber's appraised value in exchange for the company's promise to employ only local loggers, provide a sawmill, and conduct primary manufacturing on-site, as well as provide Hispanic residents with a supply of wood for domestic use. However, logging companies and the Forest Service have continually tried to dissolve the VSYU, only to have community members challenge these efforts.
- 44 Matthews (1999). In my interviews with Sam Hitt, John Talberth, Bryan Bird and many others, none wanted anything to do with compromises. After *La Compania Ocho* won the right to log the *La Manga* timber sale in court, Bird declared: "We will appeal and ... we will litigate" in order to stop the logging in the area. Both Bird and John Talberth were most centrally interested in "ecosystem health and integrity," "wildlands restoration and preservation," and they were committed to the new mantra - "to protect and restore native biological diversity." They were, in their own words, "uninterested in making concessions." As Talberth stated, in relation to the sale: "There are places you just cannot compromise.... Letting old growth be slaughtered for commercial gain is clearly one of them."
- 45 Padilla, Alfredo (1999). Discussion with author, Truchas, NM, 13 December.
- 46 Padilla, Alfredo (1999). Interview by the author, Truchas, NM, 13 December.
- 47 Cordova, Sam (1999). Interview by the author, Truchas NM, 12 November.
- 48 Hitt, Sam (1999). Interview by the author, Santa Fe, NM, 16 April.
- 49 Bird, Bryan (1999) Conversation with the author, Santa Fe, NM, 12 March.
- 50 See the Wildlands Project mission statement in *The Wild Earth* special issue (1992).
- 51 This approach to "wilderness preservation" is not unique to the Forest Guardians. The Sierra Club's broader national zero-cut campaign - which proposes to end all commercial logging on federal lands - as well as the more recent zero-grazing campaign, express this same hubris. Indeed, the zero-cut campaign has been at the center of national forest debates since 1997. However, some environmentalists from Northern New Mexico dissented. Most notably, long time award winning member, George Grossman, a well-respected member of the local Sierra Club chapter, came out in favor of the cut. His position, however, led to serious tensions not only between the local chapter and the state chapter, but also within the national policy of the Sierra Club. Members of the Guardians, many of them members of the Sierra Club, complained to the state chapter and members of the board of national Sierra Club, voicing the complaint that the local chapter was at odds with the national policy. They claimed that Grossman "violated Club policy, misrepresented the Sierra Club, and misused the Sierra Club name." They went on to call for Grossman to "step down from his position." As one member of the state chapter and a supporter of the Guardians explained at a regional Sierra Club meeting: "There is a tendency for this group [the Rio Grande chapter of the Sierra Club and Grossman in particular] to wander away from the pure environmental focus to the sociological ... [Hispanos] seem to think they have a right to live rurally and they can take it off the taxpayers anyway they want." The censorship of the Rio Grande chapter of the Sierra Club from both within and without, coupled with pressure from the Forest Guardians, further divided environmentalists in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, forcing people to choose between two very different strains of the environmental movement.

52 Max Cordova's letter was widely distributed to politicians and activists throughout Northern New Mexico.

53 White (1995: 173). I am indebted to Anand Pandian for bringing this quotation to my attention.

54 See email from Charlotte Talberth to *Earth First Journal* and the subsequent lawsuit.

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