

CHAPTER 2



On Middle Way Thinking, Gardening, Parks, and Aspects of Indian Thinking about Land

The danger in the binary thinking surrounding wilderness as Cronon and others describe it is real and the ethnic cleansing involved in the creation of so many of the United States' national parks is to the United States' enduring shame, but I am probably not alone in feeling grateful to Muir and his ilk for, after a fashion at least, keeping certain sorts of capitalist and exploitative interests away from some of the United States' most conventionally beautiful sites.¹ After all, there *are* qualitative differences in land use in terms of sustainability and ecological damage and as Cronon's critics remind us, deconstructing "nature" is not an answer in itself to environmental problems.² Evidently, "wilderness" areas need now to be returned where possible to the descendants of those who once lived there, and there needs to be much greater recognition of the indigenous history of these places. However, this larger issue of Indian redress and restitution is so far not one that has garnered much attention from mainstream environmental writers and even less consideration is given to the counterfactual—what might have happened to the native peoples living on "wilderness" and that wilderness itself had Muir and his followers not agitated to preserve designated landscapes. While the value so many contemporary thinkers find in a generally ill-defined "middle way" between pure wilderness on one hand and debauched polluted landscapes on the other sounds and is comforting, reasonable, liberal, and fair, unfortunately it has little practical historical precedent in a country that for over a century has been at the forefront of industrial capitalism. Incidences where the conflict between capital and the environment have resulted in a middle way having been found are to be fostered and valued but are comparatively rare. Before we

abandon wilderness, its protection, and the associated thorny and current issue of native redress for "wilderness" lands lost, it might be well to first cultivate more middle-way praxis, lest middle-way rhetoric is used to serve the interests of those who seek to limit native redress and expand the direct access by non-natives to areas of increasingly precious ecological wealth.

Overall, the contributors to Cronon's *Uncommon Ground* were much taken with "middleness," with the idea that some fair and relatively uncontested central way can be arrived at where both the intellectual difficulties surrounding terms such as "nature" and "wilderness" can be set aside along with the hideous legacy of cut-throat competition for resources that have characterized battles over land. Indeed, one of the volume's key contributors, Richard White, is well known for a book about middleness, his 1991 volume *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region 1650–1815*. Here White described an historical juncture after the American Revolution and the War of 1812 when "Indians ceased to have the power to force whites onto the middle ground." Thereafter, White argued, Indian peoples lost the agency to require intercultural interaction and were forced to live with an identity forced upon them externally by settler communities.³ White's characterization of "middle ground" has been systematically critiqued by a number of scholars such as Cohen (2002) and Herman (1999) who decry the idea that any romantic "middle ground" existed that could have assuaged the basic hierarchies of colonial exchange. Justifiably, they warn against any history such as White's that can be said to sidestep the larger reality of conquest in the United States, which is characterized not by meetings in the middle but by asymmetrical relationships of power.

The *Uncommon Ground* idea of an ecological and environmental "middle way" is open to similar critique. After all, it seems unlikely that a posited "middle way" can somehow make structural and cultural inequalities of power disappear or circumvent the capitalist imperatives that have up until now underpinned environmental despoliation and indigenous displacement. The idea of a middle way presupposes that some kind of abstract state of fairness can be arrived at and enforced, but who is to be the judge of such "middleness"? It seems likely to remain those with most access to power, the same interest groups who have always sought a means whereby they can mask the theft of native land and resources. My fear is that "wilderness" will be evaluated and justified on a universal balance sheet invented by settlers and that "middle way" rhetoric will serve to evade the fact that "fairness" is likely to be unilaterally defined. Here it is worth recalling Stanley Diamond's admonition that imperialism is something that *always* strives to take the guise of mutuality, to appear as a joint enterprise, as a collaboration of cultures, because such a collaboration feeds into the old idea of Western cultural superiority and progress.⁴ I am not suggesting that the motives of the *Uncommon Ground* contributors are anything but pure, but I am suggesting that "middle way" rhetoric is not in itself "pure," that is, it is unlikely to wholly refigure the balance of power between communities seeking on the one hand to

preserve clean air, resources, and/or spiritually imbued landscapes and, on the other, to exploit those same resources for short-term gain. Those who recommend we find a "middle way" environmentally must begin to reckon with the very real concern that such hopes are close to the perfect colonial fantasy, a fantasy that has always sought to mask asymmetrical power relations using a rhetoric of mutuality and unforced exchange.

ON GARDENING AND PARKS

The only true voyage of discovery . . . would be not to visit new landscapes, but to possess other eyes, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them sees.

—Marcel Proust, 'La Prisonnière', *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–27).⁵

For Cronon and others, the garden offers a solution to the problems inherent to any strict nature/culture divide. As a place of "middleness" that incorporates aspects of human endeavor and human presence it seems to hold a vision for the future. Alas, Cronon's faith in gardens as benign spaces ignores the heavy hand of class and colonialism at play within them historically. Within Western cultures hobby farms and gardens have existed in opposition to how the vast bulk of mankind has related to nature over time—that is, as a place of work. Gardens are nature mediated, places constructed through human effort to resemble a version of the natural most acceptable to man at that time. Many of them teem with carefully selected imports from around the globe, indicators of knowledge and plants colonial powers have extracted from peoples and lands they have dominated.⁶ Gardens are essentially sites of human effort to construct a new version of reality. They are most usually, places where human desires are imposed. Thus Michael Pollen is driven to write about the inevitable challenge inherent in garden work, admitting: "The refusal of this land to conform to my ideas of it—even just to sit still for a while—frequently drives me crazy."⁷

The Caribbean writer Jamaica Kincaid's *My Garden (Book)* raises particularly interesting and thoroughly colonial questions in this regard. Kincaid recognizes that gardens, even those produced so as to create joy, are an exercise in power. In becoming a gardener, she admits she "joined the conquering class." "I have crossed a line," she acknowledges, "but at whose expense? I cannot begin to look, because what if it is someone I know?"⁸ The good she finds in gardening lies with the way in which it brings humans literally in touch with elemental forces; but it is not an unalloyed good. Rather, the garden, like certain forms of art, is primarily a reflection of the gardener, his perceptive capabilities, and the extent to which the non-human has facilitated the execution of his dream.

In a real sense, praising gardens is difficult for a committed environmentalist since so much about the contemporary garden and specifically the contemporary lawn, in the middle class and North American context at least, is antithetical to nature. As Paul Robbins and Julie T. Sharp have shown masterfully in their 2003 study, "Producing and Consuming Chemicals: The Moral Economy of the American Lawn," late twentieth-century wealth has brought about an unprecedented spread in what they call a monocultural "lawn aesthetic" and with it serious environmental hazard from the burgeoning urban application of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides. They argue that while the total use of chemicals applied in agriculture has been decreasing because of land-use conversion, these gains are increasingly offset by the greater use of chemicals on home lawns, making lawns "a significant problem." Intriguingly and worryingly in an era of recycling and popular environmentalism, U.S. homeowners apply chemicals to their lawns even though they understand the negative environmental impacts of doing so. Why? Robbins and Sharp suggest it is because advertising and culture more generally signs the lawn representationally as part of consumers' identity. It is seen as a badge of middle-class status, as a symbol of collective consumption and as a way of participating in and strengthening the traditional nuclear family. Lawns allow for the conspicuous performance of class identity with agrochemicals playing a key part in gardening rituals that display the ability of the gardener to refrain from productive work. What's more, the lawn (and with it pesticides and chemical fertilizers) are sold to consumers as a means of restoring lost community, of restoring a lost link to nature, a lost sense of integrated family life, and a lost sense of work as meaningful and tangible. All this may seem very far from the experience you or I may have of gardening, but it speaks to a larger truth—that too often our conscious concerns about environmental hazards are overrun by largely unconscious desires mediated through advertising that ironically cause us to exacerbate—environmental hazard.⁹

As the quote from Marcel Proust which opens his chapter suggests, positive change can come as much from a new perspective as from new territory. If gardening as most Americans experience it is to have a positive actual and metaphorical influence in the twenty-first century, it needs to be seen with new awareness. Exotic foreign blooms need, perhaps, to be thought about in historical, ecological, and colonial context—"weeds" to be viewed as the best adapted species for the space they inhabit and garden landscapes to be thought of as distinctly part of rather than extraneous to wider land use patterns. In a more temporally synoptic sense, it is worth also bearing in mind the amount of conflict gardening has spawned because of its innate territoriality. There is much anthropological and archaeological evidence to suggest that mankind's adoption of agriculture led to a significant increase in war and aggression between communities. What has been planted cannot be easily left behind and is easily destroyed. Furthermore, the population boom associated in distant time with

the onset of an agricultural way of life is thought to have triggered its own ongoing battles over resources.¹⁰

The idea of the garden is as fraught with historical complexity, biblical roots, and ugly memories as any other. "Garden" has always existed in juxtaposition with the other terms now out of fashion and prone to deconstruction—terms such as "wilderness" and "park." For Judeo-Christian peoples the Garden of Eden was the original park, a paradise—paradise being a word whose primary dictionary definition is that of an "enclosed park." In Eden mankind is said to have been born in a bucolic ideal, with a fertile orchard, a river, and animals grazing. "Garden" is a Germanic term, related to the English word "yard," both of which primarily mean "enclosed area." Thus from the foundational Western story, mankind in right relationship to the world lives in a garden in contrast to its opposite, a wilderness. Olwig explains: "The garden idea is potent because it has long been a vital symbol in Western culture of a moral society living in natural social and environmental harmony. Historically, the counterpositioning of the paradise garden park to the wilderness was a means of making a symbolic statement about the *nature* of *natural* national existence."¹¹ In essence, garden is good, and wilderness bad according to these oppositions as the previous chapter explored.

It is important to bear in mind that all gardens, like all parks and enclosed areas, are as much about who and what gets excluded as they are about who and what gets included. Furthermore, there is little that is a priori "natural" about the process of enclosure. Enclosure of land is stage one of a process of constructing an image or series of images that reflect the intention of the gardener. Consider Yosemite, the first nature reserve set aside by Congress, in this context. John Muir described the area and the neighboring smaller version Hetch Hetchy valley (later be the subject of so much controversy) as the perfect park landscape, "a spacious flowery lawn four or five miles long, surrounded by magnificent snowy mountains." It was for Muir, just like the Garden of Eden, a place with boundaries "drawn by the Lord."¹² From the first Yosemite was as much about constructing space as it was about preserving it. It provided an amplitude of picturesque theatrical scenes or *scenery* (a term first used in 1784) and it made for good landscape, a term originally used by Dutch artists (*landscape*) and later adapted by the English to describe a gently appealing view. To create and maintain an Eden-like image much had to be removed, including a whole (non-Indian) village whose buildings were eventually destroyed between 1959 and 1963 by the Park Service leaving only a church that dates from 1879. However, prior to this as explained, the original inhabitants of Yosemite-as-Eden had been much more brutally removed so as to create an environment that matched the non-Indian imagination.

Yosemite was set aside by Abraham Lincoln in 1864. It seemed so blissfully inviting as a park vista to elite non-Indian Americans because just twelve years

earlier the original Miwok/Ahwahneechee inhabitants who had practiced the horticulture that helped make it so had been forcibly driven out or killed. According to Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, the foremost scholars of the Indian relationship to the national park phenomena, it would be difficult for any park to have built a worse record overall when it comes to treatment of native peoples than Yosemite. Its record includes: "prior occupation with extensive horticulture by Indians, brutal military conquest of the land, a park created with no regard for past or present native claims; an Indian petition for redress of grievances; the ignoring of the petition by Congress; repeated efforts by park rangers to evict remnant villages, Park Service neglect of ethnographic interpretation; and belated NPS recognition that Yosemite was, and is, important to aboriginal people."¹³ It is also essential to recognize that the native peoples in Yosemite Valley and California had survived a brutal legacy prior to Yosemite being set aside in 1864. Drastic population loss followed contact with American, Mexican, and Spanish settlers, and the 1849 gold rush and the giant influx of settler population accelerated an existing high death rate from Hispanic slavery and disease. The Mariposa Indian War that then ensued saw a litany of Indian abuses and brutal attacks on Indian peoples, a number of whom had been forced to work in gold mines or forced onto reservations.¹⁴ In 1890 52 Ahwahneechee asked Congress for a million dollars in gold compensation for what their ancestors had suffered. The petition noted how non-Indians had misused Yosemite and its resources: "The valley is cut up completely by dusty, sandy roads, leading from the hotels of whites in every direction . . . All seem to come only to hunt money . . . This is not the way in which we treated this park when we had it . . . This valley was taken away from us [for] a pleasure ground . . . Yosemite is no longer a National Park, but merely a hay-farm and cattle range."¹⁵ No one listened.

Of course, Yosemite is not unique in terms of national parks having a complex and contested relationship with indigenous peoples. As Keller and Turek's work reveals, a closer look at almost all of America's national parks reveals a history of Indian peoples fighting to regain sovereignty over lands designated "wilderness" and fighting to regain access to land they have recognized as sacred for generations. While "wilderness" sites are well known, the indigenous peoples who for generations have lived there or who have claim to those sites are generally not. For example, the Nez Percé in Yellowstone and at the Big Hole; the Sioux in the Badlands; the Havasupai, Hopi, and Zuni at the Grand Canyon; the Seminoles in the Everglades; Chippewas on Lake Superior; Paiutes at Pipe Spring; Quinault and Klallam at Olympic; Shoshone in Death Valley; Sheepeaters in Yellowstone; Papagos at Smokies; Navajo at Chaco Canyon and Rainbow Bridge; Blackfeet in Glacier; or Pueblos at the Petroglyph National Monument in Albuquerque. Many more could be written about—Big Bend, the Badlands, Grand Teton, Nez Percé, Great Smoky, Death Valley, Alaska, Hawaii.¹⁶ Essentially, between 1864 and 1916 when the National Park Service was formed, the United States engaged in the forceful creation of wilderness areas enclosed as national parks with their

original inhabitants forcefully removed either by coercion and/or treaty or other means. In this sense, park creation was a stage in the process of conquest. Over time Indian peoples have been removed from "wilderness" areas because their presence and activities have jarred with a dearly held non-Indian image of what pristine wilderness should look like.

Admittedly when the artist George Catlin made his voice among the very first to call for the creation of a "Nation's Park," he had also hoped to protect Plains Indians peoples as well as the larger game and landscape they were associated with. In *North American Indians* (1832) he wrote:

And what a splendid contemplation too, when one (who has traveled these realms, and can duly appreciate them) imagines them as they might in future be seen (by some great protecting policy of government) preserved in their primitive beauty and wildness, in a magnificent park, where the world could see for ages to come, the native Indian in his classic attire, galloping his wild horse, with sinewy bow, and shield and lance, amid the fleeting herds of elk and buffalo. What a beautiful and thrilling specimen for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages! A Nations Park, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty!¹⁷

But these were Indians frozen in aspic. They were not, in Catlin's idea, coeval with a developing America; rather, they were part of a vision of perfection that he felt represented the quintessence of the United States. The Park as he imagined it was not unlike a living diorama and Indian peoples were there as part of a snapshot scene—the West in all its pristine beauty and wildness. He wrote of them in the same way that he wrote about bison and other American fauna. National parks in this sense can be thought of as related to museums—both were triumphalist spaces where America represented itself to itself and to the wider world. The Indian role in this representation was always as a primitive, prior stage, now vanished. The museum movement and the national park movement were more or less coterminous. As elite representations, they were to deliver similar messages to future generations about American superiority and American Indian absence and/or savagery.

The original act of enclosure of national park lands has not lessened in impact over time in Native America. Acute conflicts have persisted into the twenty-first century between native groups and park administrations over issues to do with spiritual freedom, rights to water, the right to hunt, gather, and subsist, the right to sell beads and other Indian crafts, the right to seasonally occupy land as well as over outright claims to sovereignty over land itself. To its credit the National Park Service in 1987 officially committed in its Native American Relationships Management Policy to actively promote tribal cultures within parks. However,

this has not necessarily made it easier for park administrators to balance the multiple conflicting interests in parks and such cultural empathy on its own cannot address fundamental claims to exclusive access and/or for land redress.

It was ever thus. Parks and the power politics of enclosure cannot be separated however far back one looks. It is thought that Eden was modelled on enclosed parks owned by Assyrian and Persian nobility. Scholars of the park idea have suggested that the word "Eden" derives from both the Hebrew epithet for delight and the Persian word *Edina* meaning field and park. If the book of Genesis was written or edited around the time of the Jewish exile to Babylon (597–538 BC), then it is likely that Jews during their deportation would have learned of Assyrian and Persian royal game parks.¹⁸ These would have seemed to a people coping with desert, like heavenly spaces, flowing with water and every sort of amenable animal and plant. For Americans, however, the primary image of the park was European. Europe had undergone something of a park-making frenzy in the centuries prior to 1700, and those parks had also been all about hunting—about ensuring that game came and stayed in a designated area where royals and the nobility could hunt and be sure of a constant supply of animals. Thus many of these parks would have a pale, a steep bank with stakes, so that wild deer could jump into the park but not be able to escape from it. They were carefully managed so that game suitable for the hunt thrived and predators such as wolves were kept out. The ideal medieval park amplified its pleasure-making possibilities by having scenic, rolling landscapes that amplified the sounds of hunting, which added to the hunting nobility's general delight and thrill at carrying out the activity.

European parks were also a means whereby the rich and powerful could advertise their good taste and dominance over others. Their creation, just like the creation of American national parks much later, had required the driving off of hunter-gatherers. Parks reserved land such that the poor found themselves bereft of spaces to graze their own livestock, gather fuel, or glean subsistence. Peasants who dared to steal the English King's venison could be punished by castration, amputation, transportation to the colonies, or by hanging. Deer parks were attacked during the English Civil War (1642–1649) and, unsurprisingly, when Oliver Cromwell's "people's" government was basking in a new world following the execution of King Charles 1st at the end of the war, it offered up 93 parklands for sale to raise national revenue. A letter dated July 8, 1524 describing a large stretch of North American coastline to King Francis I promoted its virtues not primarily in terms of any supposed gold and spices but in terms of its potential as an excellent game park. It read, "There are animals in great numbers: stags, roebuck, lynxes, wolves, and other sorts" as well as "wild animals that are considerably more wild than in our land of Europe, on account of their being continually disturbed by the hunters," and a host of birds "suitable and convenient for all the delightful pleasures of the chase."¹⁹

Park-making today involves the same kinds of enforced exclusion as in the past, something that Thomas R. DeGregori, an economics professor at the

University of Houston, recently made clear in a wonderfully no-nonsense book, *The Environment, Our Natural Resources and Modern Technology*. DeGregori discusses shoot-to-kill policies for tribal Africans found hunting on African game parks, the thousands of tribal people evicted in India in the 1970s in order to create tiger parks, and the legal penalties applied today to tribal peoples who attempt to subsist on what were their homelands at Park Montagne 'Ambre in Madagascar, Ranomafana National Park, Madagascar, and the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary in India. He points out that the name the Tsonga gave to the rest camp in Kruger National Park, Skukuza, means "he who sweeps clean." It was so named by the tribesmen because they were forced to leave their villages so the Kruger "wilderness" could be created.²⁰ We can add to DeGregori's examples the abuse suffered by the Samburu people in Kenya after the land they had lived on for two decades was sold to two U.S.-based wildlife charities, the Nature Conservancy and the African Wildlife Foundation. The charities gifted the land to Kenya to create the Laikipia National Park. The Samburu then found themselves displaced by militias and their livestock impounded in November 2011. The NGO Survival International has now taken the Samburu case which includes allegations of an associated shooting, rape and intimidation to the UN. A further recent example of forceful indigenous displacement involves Botswana's Kalahari Bushmen who have been fighting since February 2002 to have wells unblocked and to regain access to their home, the Kalahari game reserve. Their eviction is linked by many to the fact that the Kalahari game reserve is in the middle of the world's richest diamond-producing region. Mining for diamonds will start in 2013, although now Gem Diamonds who bought the rights from De Beers, have promised to work with the Bushmen to ensure no further degradation of their communities.

To an extent, American national parks were conceived as democratic spaces in opposition to the parks of Europe. In practice, however, they replicated the same processes of exclusion but in the American case that exclusion was predominantly racial—it was Indian peoples rather than a peasant class who found themselves locked out of Eden. American preserves were thought of as sites of restoration and renewal for American people, available to all as an antidote to the hurried getting and spending of the nation's cities. President Roosevelt, who dedicated five national parks during his presidency, said explicitly in 1903 that America's parklands offered "essential democracy" compared to the walled exclusivity of European hunting parks.²¹ John Muir for his part certainly saw national parks as salves for the nation. He wrote in 1901, "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home . . . that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life."²² Aside from their democratic and psychological value to the nation, national parks were also seen as a means of demonstrating a uniquely American sense of identity and beauty. Yosemite, for example, was shaped by the landscape designer Frederick

Law Olmsted because it had the potential to demonstrate spectacularly to the world a uniquely American identity. Here, after all, was a natural cathedral capable in its beauty of rivaling the most dramatic religious buildings in Europe dripping in gold. Olmsted saw Yosemite as a monument to American national identity in the same way as Thomas Crawford's Statue of Liberty (1886), Central Park in New York (1857), and the Capitol dome in Washington, DC (1866). America's national parks were seen as repositories of beauty unique among the sights in the world and the fact that such wonders were set aside and preserved by Americans was held up as evidence of the young nation's enlightened nature, democratic spirit, and cultural maturity. But this rhetoric, like the rhetoric of assimilation that accompanied it at the time, did not stretch to Indians. Even for John Muir, for whom Yosemite was "a people's park," those people did not include Indians. Although the parklands had been their home they were to forfeit the right to burn so as to manage the land or to gather and hunt so as to subsist.²³

In *Uncommon Ground*, Cronon ends his critique of the concept of wilderness by suggesting that "Nature is a mirror onto which we project our own ideas and values; but it is also a material reality that sets limits [] on the possibilities of human ingenuity and storytelling."²⁴ This seems true when we look at the histories of national parks in the United States, but even if we confine our analysis to them still only superficially so. If parks do show our attempt to hold up a mirror to ourselves, to our own settler sense of paradise and Eden, then that mirror is cracked. National parks, like the land that surrounds them, cannot escape history or relationships of power. Neither will nature in the wider sense allow us to perceive it solely as we would like to. It controls *our* survival, something perhaps better recognized now due to a rise in catastrophic natural events than when Cronon produced his collection.

ASPECTS OF INDIAN THINKING

Indigenous approaches to space, place, land, and to the environment have tended to be and to remain wholly different from those of Euro-Americans. Most often, there is no sense of "the wild." Instead, be it desert, forest, or canyon, Indian peoples have simply registered a sense of home and, more often than not, have over time rejected the notion that there should be the designation "wild" at all. As the Sioux figure Luther Standing Bear put it, "We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams with tangled growth, as wild." Only to the white man was nature a wilderness and only to him was the land 'infested' with 'wild' animals and 'savage' people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful . . .²⁵

One of the best pieces of writing explaining these differences is by the Maori writer Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou) in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, where she writes at length about different indigenous and nonindigenous conceptions of space and

of how over time, "indigenous space has been colonized." Western notions of space are embedded in Western language, she explains, and as we have already discussed, are rooted in the exactitudes of Western mathematics and are concerned primarily with a process of compartmentalization. Indigenous communities do not share such an emphasis on differentiation for example between earth/cosmos, public/private space, city/country space.²⁶ Instead, for many indigenous communities and individuals, land is a basic source of identity. It is foundational to a sense of cultural belonging and central to the oral traditions that reflect the great diversity of Indian lifeways. As Luther Standing Bear put it in his 1933 book, Indians belong to America because of repeated birth and rebirth, because their bodies are "formed in the dust of their forefather's bones."²⁷ Many Indian oral traditions emphasize a fundamental sense, not of compartmentalization, but of interconnectedness and relationship between all things, between animals, land, peoples, and their languages. Often linked to this in a number of native cultures is a requirement to seek individual, communal, and environmental balance so as to ensure the survival of community within specific landscapes. Thus the self in Indian oral traditions has unlimited context: It benefits from a profound sense of kinship to all animate and inanimate forms of being and there is no split between the sacred and the secular or between humanity and the rest of creation. Place, self, and community are so intimately linked that loss of territory constitutes a deprivation of psychic strength.

The centrality of place to Indian lifeways is centrally reflected in the foundational stories of various groups and in the writing and reflections of the foremost Native American Indian writers. The primary purpose of American Indian origin stories, according to Clara Sue Kidwell and Alan Velie, is to give Indian people their sense of place in the world and establish human relationships with existing environments, those environments being physical manifestations of spirituality and the source of tribal memory. The rock formations, for example, scattered to the north of the Navajo reservation are the remains of the monsters slain by Child of Waters and Monster Slayer. The great monolith in Wyoming named by the National Park Service as Devil's Tower is where seven Kiowa sisters took refuge when their brother turned into a bear. The Black Hills in South Dakota were pushed up when the land was pounded during the great race between the two leggeds (the Lakota people, the birds, and the bears) and the four leggeds (all the other creatures).²⁸

This same sense of the fundamental importance of place has been reiterated by many Native American contemporary writers, each of whom echo in their own way A. A. Hedge Coke's remark that "Place is important. Essential."²⁹ As the Acoma poet Simon Ortiz has put it, Native Americans are admired and respected for their insistence "on a concept of self that is absolutely tied to the interdependence of land and people." For many, land and language itself are indissolubly linked. Jeannette C. Armstrong points out how, according to her Okanagan ancestors, "language was given to us by the land we live within," a belief she

connects to the N'silxchn concept of speaking as a profound and sacred responsibility.³⁰ Leslie Marmon Silko has stressed the same deep connection, praising the fact that "the interior process of the imagination" in the Paganate and Laguna context, "never deteriorated into Cartesian duality, cutting off the human from the natural world."³¹ This same relationship to land and place or, specifically, Christianity's lack of a relationship to land is also key to Vine Deloria Jr.'s critique in *God is Red*, where he suggests that Western European peoples and their twentieth-century spiritual, economic, and ecological crises all stem from their biggest problem—a time-centered, rather than place-centered theology. Such a settler emphasis on events rather than places, on unfolding history rather than abiding relationship has in turn been linked to the fact that many non-native religions place an ultimate stress on some future world or "heaven," rather than focusing in a more psychologically beneficial fashion on the present. Deloria sums it up as follows:

The vast majority of Indian tribal religions . . . have a sacred center at a particular place, be it a river, a mountain, a plateau, valley, or other natural feature. This center enables the people to look out along the four dimensions and locate their lands, to relate all historical events with the confines of this particular land, and to accept responsibility for it . . . Other religions also have a sense of sacred places. The Holy Land has historically been a battlefield of three world religions, each of which has particular sacred places it cherishes. But these places are appreciated primarily for their historical significance and do not provide the sense of permanency and rootedness that the Indian sacred places represent.³²

Does this set of fundamental connections between such a number of Indian communities and land mean that Indian peoples have a special or better understanding of their link to American soil? Certainly there is a long history of Indian voices warning Euro-America of the dangers of continual exploitation of land. The most often cited is Chief Seal'th, a leader of the Duwamish, who in 1854 prepared to move his people across Puget Sound and away from the growing city of Seattle. There has been much debate about whether words were put into Chief Seal'th's mouth by his original translator, Dr. Henry Smith (1854), but these sorts of debate cannot erase the larger story—a long history of Indian spokespersons bemoaning the conceptual and practical differences in how native and non-native peoples relate to Indian land. Some of the strongest voices in this regard were Luther Standing Bear who watched the last years of settlement on the Great Plains; the Wampanoag sachem Massasoit; Tecumseh, leader of the pan-Indian alliance of 1805; Black Hawk in the 1830s; and in 1877 in particular, the Nez Percé leader Chief Joseph.

A long history of Indian concern for land and its use is one thing, but this does not mean Indian peoples deserve the kind of blanket identification with nature that non-native culture has imposed on them almost since discovery. A number of arguments within American history and anthropology have opened up the fault lines in thinking about these issues. One especially forceful debate has been over whether native peoples actually ever used the term "Mother Earth." On one side Sam Gill in *Mother Earth* (1987) has claimed they did not, while on the other Vine Deloria has documented the metaphor of earth as mother within indigenous traditions as far back as 1776. It is perhaps easier to document the personification of nature in female form within Western traditions. As Peter Coates points out in *Nature* (1998), a personified nature (*natura*) had become an object of piety, endowed with moral purpose and a meaning independent of mankind, as early as the fifth century in Greece. Sometimes the ancient Greeks explicitly personified that creative force as female.³³

A bigger set of ongoing arguments has developed over whether Indians ever actually were ecologically minded at all. Calvin Martin in *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (1978) suggested such thinking is just another stereotype from the late 1960s. He argued that the Indian was, "Propped up for everything that was environmentally sound, the Indian was introduced to the American public as the great high priest of the Ecology Cult."³⁴ He also suggested that the rapid depopulation of beaver that accompanied the fur trade testifies to Indian culpability as market-oriented capitalists intent on species destruction. Too often this debate has deteriorated into a non-productive blame game as, for example, in Coates's discussion that opens "Were Native Americans really such innocents?" In truth such language masks the larger issue of colonial guilt, which regularly telescopes the Indian past across the centuries so as to highlight instances of demonstrable Indian culpability in species extinction. Most often, the provenance and authenticity of Seattle's 1854 proclamation speech is questioned in these discussions so as to somehow suggest that this in itself weakens the overwhelming evidence across time of a reciprocal and spiritual approach to land and nature within the great bulk of Indian communities.³⁵ It was the film producer Ted Perry who put some of the environmentally aware phrases in Chief Seal'th's mouth. He has pointed out that in fact the truly pertinent question is why non-Indians are generally so ready to accept environmentalism when it comes from an Indian but so resistant to taking responsibility for their own actions with reference to the environment.³⁶

Of course, the real evidence of positive Indian reciprocal relationships to the environment comes not just from spokespersons such as Seattle; it is littered throughout Indian cultures and spiritualities, as demonstrated by writers such as Christopher Vecsey and Robert W. Venables in *American Indian Environments*.³⁷ Other writers such as the Yamasee academic Donald Grinde and the prolific environmental and Indian studies scholar Bruce Johansen in

Ecocide of Native America: Environmental Destruction of Indian Lands and Peoples have provided powerful evidence of positive Indian relationships to the natural world over time, especially when it comes to issues of sustainability. They record examples of pre-contact Indian population control, of the conscious spacing of children and the use of plant contraceptives.³⁸ Thomas Jefferson commented of the Indians he encountered: "They have fewer children than we do . . . [and] have learned the practice of procuring abortion by the use of some vegetable."³⁹ Similarly, the Cherokee's oral history, for example, has stories in which animals worry about the land becoming too crowded with human beings. In sum, it hard to disagree with Johansen and Grinde's overall conclusions that "the written and oral histories of many Native American peoples indicate that their cultures evolved over thousands of years largely in symbiosis with the earth that sustained them. Often these customs were incorporated into religious rituals that held the earth to be the sustainer of all things and linked the welfare of the earth to the survival of people who lived upon it."⁴⁰

In a real sense the most obvious evidence of a powerful and abiding ecological awareness among Indian communities comes from indigenous languages themselves. A community's language is a testimony to how that community comprehends the world. That language's inbuilt orientation, whether toward positive and sustainable participation with nature or away from it, speaks volumes. As Illinois scholar James Treat has pointed out, there is ample evidence of such participation with nature in languages such as *este-cate em opunvkv*, the Mystoke language. He explains, "The months of the year are named for important moments in the annual round of subsistence: seasonal observations and activities related to agricultural production, but also times for gathering the fruit of undomesticated plants. An older way of life is signified by *em vliktv* that define Myskoke kinship and by *opvkv* performed at Myskoke ceremonial grounds: various clans and dances mostly named for animals, many of which provided sustenance to our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Even the phrase *este-cate em opunvkv*, literally 'red people, their talk,' uses sensory metaphors—visual and aural—to describe itself." Treat stresses that Myskoke is like many American Indian languages in the sense that it is action-oriented. It has a grammar that revolves around verbs. Thus it stresses actions rather than objects, connections rather than separations, an emphasis suited to fostering an awareness of reciprocity and exchange.⁴¹

As Grinde and Johansen have pointed out, the truly salient issue is not in fact how Indian peoples related to nature in the past but how they are to cope with environmental issues today, given that Indian lands are subject to some of the worst environmental threats within the United States from strip mining, radioactive fallout caused by uranium mining, and air and groundwater pollution caused by toxic industrial wastes. The current crisis in Indian country is about survival in the first instance as much as it is about the potential to preserve traditional Indian approaches to land and the life of the spirit in late capitalism.

A difficulty that persists is how to and whether to separate aspects of Indian history, belief, and practice from varieties of anti-modernism. A great deal within mainstream Indian thinking has always gelled with anti-modernism, and it has always had an attraction for anti-modernists within the ecology movement. One of the latest exceptional examples is the work of ex-advertising executive Jerry Mander who wrote *In the Absence of the Sacred* in 1991. Here he asks us to reassess what he calls our "technoutopic" ways, which he argues are in fact decreasing rather than increasing our quality of life and workloads while leading us inexorably toward environmental exhaustion. His ideas are backed up by various Indian writers, not least the editors of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois') *Akwesasne Notes*, who argue "The way of life known as Western Civilization is on a death path on which their own culture has no viable answers."⁴²

IN CONCLUSION

Much about the differences between Indian and non-Indian thinking isolated within this and other chapters has to do with a non-Indian limiting of perspective, to do with a non-Indian desire to categorize, demarcate, and separate. Inclusion of Indian perspectives would necessitate a fundamental expansion of thinking concerning space, place, or, for that matter, landscape and nature. This is because Indian approaches to space are large. They include among much else memory, story, and ancestral knowledge. It is a largeness that if we are to believe Luther Standing Bear writing in 1933 is formative to art, culture, individual self-knowledge, and in the broadest sense, to a fundamental understanding of America. Standing Bear understood his contemporaries' angst as a symptom of their distance from American land. The white man he said, "is too far removed from its formative processes. The roots of the tree of his life have not yet grasped the rock and soil [. . .] The man from Europe is still a foreigner and an alien." That is, for Standing Bear, white America had no place and therefore insufficient orientation to create beauty and art. He asked, "For who but the man indigenous to the soil could produce its song, story, and folk-tale; who but the man who loved the dust beneath his feet could shape it and put it into undying ceramic forms; who but he who loved the reeds that grew beside still waters, and the damp roots of shrub and tree, could save it from seasonal death, and with almost superhuman patience weave it into enduring objects of beauty-into timeless art!"⁴³

Of course, Indian peoples are not alone in having this enabling and creatively spacious approach to land. Gaelic-speaking Irish, to give just one example for whom place might be said culturally to be almost everything, have their own term that builds story directly into place—*dinnsheanchas*, meaning "the lore of place." In contrast, for a number of thinkers writing in the Western tradition from the late 1950s, nature is less about this primary expansiveness, about this fundamental link between the spoken word and place, instead it is merely what we chose to

represent it as and as such it is infinitely malleable and subjective. Thus C. S. Lewis could write, I suspect, vastly underestimating the discriminating powers both of ants and men: "If ants had a language they would, no doubt, call their ant-hill an artifact and describe the brick wall in its neighbourhood as a *natural* object. Nature in fact would be for them all that was not 'ant-made'. Just so, for us, *nature* is all that is not man-made; the natural state of anything is its state when not modified by man."⁴⁴ Marjorie Hope Nicolson was even more explicit, making how nature is represented brutally definitive. She wrote, "we see in nature what we have been taught to look for, we feel what we have been prepared to feel."⁴⁵

Yet much is changing. For the first time, unique and discrete histories of specific animals, plants, rivers, and forests are being written. Such narratives and analyses make the category "nature" broader and richer and help us to conceive of man's cultural relationships to the non-human world in a more textured fashion.⁴⁶ While place is notoriously difficult to theorize and define (Lineu Castello in a recent wonderful book, *Rethinking the Meaning of Place*, compared it to "passion" whose definition is similarly damaged when put into words), it is something culturally resonant that we deeply fear the loss of.⁴⁷ Even as the twenty-first century world embraces inauthenticity and tolerates what has been called the Disneyfication and cloning of lived environments, we yearn to reconnect spirit, memory, story, and place. It is a yearning that was powerfully expressed by the anthropologist/philosopher David Abram in his 1996 book, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*, where he writes:

Once the stories are written down, the visible text becomes the primary mnemonic activator of spoken stories—the inked traces left by the pen as it traverses the page replacing the earthly tracks left by the animals, and by one's animal ancestors, as they moved across the land. The places themselves are no longer necessary to the remembrance of the stories, and often come to seem wholly incidental to the tales, the arbitrary backdrops for human events that might just as well have happened elsewhere. The transhuman, ecological determinants of the originally oral stories are no longer emphasized, and often are written out of the tales entirely. In this manner the stories and myths, as they lose their oral, performative character, forfeit as well their intimate links to the more-than-human earth. And the land itself, stripped of the particularizing stories that once sprouted from every cave and streambed and cluster of trees, begins to lose its multiplicitous power. The human senses, intercepted by the written word, are no longer gripped and fascinated by the expressive shapes and sounds of particular places. The spirits fall silent. Gradually the felt primacy of *place* is forgotten, superseded by a new, abstract notion of "space" as a homogenous and placeless void.⁴⁸

Other writers, such as the Columbia scholar William Leach, share some of these fears and the intensity with which the attack on place has intensified since the 1960s. For Leach, the post-1988 transformation of certain Indian reservations into "placeless" oases for gambling is a prime example of a larger set of processes leading to "the destruction of a sense of place and to the transformation of America into a country of exiles." If the preceding discussion of the key terms surrounding land and spirit in America has proven unsettling, it is only because these terms link so closely to our sense of security and well-being, that is, to our place in the world. Place, as Leach suggests, is at its best, "the collective outgrowth of our control over our own lives and destinies." It is to explaining our disenchantment with place over time and to Indian responses to that disenchantment that we now turn.

and resting, and not straining themselves to meet with the recurrent demands of settled farming. Given that hunter-gathering is seemingly so pleasant a lifestyle, it is something of a puzzle as to why man adopted settled agriculture in the first place unless it was as a result of population pressure. But given that the bulk of mankind has done so, it may well be the case that the roots of the present-day Western relationship to nature lie with that shift from hunting to farming, from a life in reciprocal and respectful relationship to plants, animals, water, stone, to one where these things have to be controlled and spatially ordered so as to ensure survival. This penchant for order stemming from a survival need connected to farming may explain why the absence of order—wildness—has in Western traditions come to be associated with chaos and negativity. In turn, order has come to be associated with good.³²

ON INDIAN REJECTION OF NON-INDIAN APPROACHES TO LAND AND SPIRIT AND THE NATURE OF ANIMISM

The earliest records suggest that outright rejection of the whole set of premises upon which Western Christian thinking was based was a persistent characteristic of Indian–non-Indian interaction at contact. Even through the filter of probable repeated translation over time, it is clear that this rejection was more often than not tinged with a firm helping of irony and/or sarcasm. For example, Benjamin Franklin described how when Indians had had explained to them “the historical facts on which our [own] religion is founded, such as the fall of our first parents by eating an apple,” an Indian spokesperson stood and said: “What you have told us . . . is all very good. It is, indeed, bad to eat apples. It is much better to make them into cider. We are much obliged by your kindness in coming so far to tell us these things which you have heard from your mothers; in return I will tell you some of those which we have heard from ours.” Franklin may well have been using the Indian voice on this occasion to make fun of his own people, but nonetheless, he was representing a kind of Indian puzzlement over the central spiritual narrative guiding Euro-American “discovery” that characterized his and previous eras. It is the same sort of puzzlement that Indian peoples repeatedly felt when Euro-Americans persisted in calling them not by their tribally specific names but by an alien invented pan-continental term—*Indian*. The word has now been reinscribed by indigenous Americans, but it is important to keep in mind that it was originally a term that invoked presuppositions Euro-Americans already had very much in place prior to Columbus’s first journey. From the Euro-American perspective anyone they encountered at that time would perforce be an Indian, since Indian was then a synonym for all of Asia east of the river Indus. Indies was the broadest term Columbus could use for all of the areas he claimed under royal patent.³³ For generations of indigenous Americans the word remained a puzzle. As one unnamed Indian man asked the Massachusetts missionary John Eliot in 1646: “Why do you call us Indians?”³⁴ He might just as easily have asked

for an explanation of another fiction—why non-Indians persisted in not perceiving the long-term Indian use of land.

Diversity is at the core of Native American approaches to the life of the spirit; but among what might be called traditional perspectives, animism has a key role. A sense that perception and communication are not the sole preserve of humans and that trees, stones, animals, and places have their own consciousness spans a number of native traditions. It is a sense powerfully expressed by the Meskwaki poet and novelist Ray A. Young Bear, who describes a fundamental kinship between the human and non-human world within which the human is not superior but instead dependent upon a much larger spiritual and material equilibrium. At the heart of this kinship relationship is place and what it is owed spiritually and materially. Young Bear writes:

My maternal grandmother used to say it was crucial we have a place of our own.

Listening intently, I learned that our lives were dependent upon a plethora of animistic factors immersed in ethereal realities. Basically, she instructed that the very ground on which we all stood, Grandmother Earth, was the embodiment of a former Supernatural being. She was all of nature, this Grandmother: She was the foundation for rivers, lakes, fields and forests; she provided homes and sustenance for insects, birds, reptiles, fish, animals, and human beings. She held everything together, including the clouds, stars, sun, and moon. Our sole obligation, my grandmother instructed, in having been created in the first place by the Holy Grandfather, is to maintain the Principal Religion of the Earthlodge clans.³⁵

For Young Bear, “the tribal domain where animism and supernaturalism prevailed” is at the heart of Indian community.³⁶

Connected to the heart of animistic approaches to the world is language in a different grammar and different conceptual register than we may be used to. It is a linguistic understanding that has been mapped conceptually in sinuous prose with specific reference to the Koyukon of Alaska by the British social anthropologist Tim Ingold drawing on the work of Richard Nelson. Ingold describes the “meshwork of storied knowledge” that characterizes these other ways of knowing, a knowledge discrete from the “colonial imaginary that sees the world spread out before it like a surface to be occupied, and whose contents are to be collected, inventoried and classified.” This other way of knowing the world conceives of it as continual birth. Thus the fundamentals of grammar change such that names become verbs rather than nouns. The focus is on what is ongoing rather than on what momentarily is and knowing is more akin to storytelling.

Particularly interesting is Ingold's application of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's discussion³⁷ of how animals are perceived when it is not as anthropomorphized subjects or as a set of characteristics that may be classified. Ingold explains:

The third way is to regard the animal as going on: not as a living thing of a certain kind but as the manifestation of a process of becoming, of continuous creation, or simply of *being alive*. From this perspective the wolf, for example, 'is not fundamentally a characteristic or a certain number of characteristics; it is wolfing' (Deleuze & Guattari, p.265). To say that the wolf is a pack animal, argue Deleuze and Guattari, is not to suppose that it lives in packs, or to enumerate the individuals of which each pack is comprised. Rather, it is to say that the wolf is *itself* a pack. It is, in other words, the 'going on' of wolfing, seen now here, now there, in its multiple instantiations.

Thus Ingold explains how hunting cultures like the Koyukon can go beyond nouns *without* going beyond language. This creates, reflects, and perpetuates an entirely different understanding of and relationship to animals and other beings. Thus to speak of an animal in this fashion as the Koyukon may is to enter into the process of its life: "speaking its name is part of the process whereby language itself is brought to life: the animal can be animating in a language that is language-ing." Ingold takes this active, engaged and dynamic language relationship further explaining how:

In a language language—one not semantically locked into a categorical frame but creating itself endlessly in the inventive telling of its speakers—animals do not exist, either as subjects or objects; rather they *occur*. The name of an animal as it is uttered, the animal's story as it is told, and the creature itself in its life activity are all forms of this occurrence. Animals happen, they carry on, they *are* their stories, and their names—to repeat—are not nouns but verbs.³⁸

The above discussion, while it makes clear some of the discrete characteristics of indigenous perspectives on land, spirit, and language, should not be read as suggesting all things indigenous or a pervasive indigenous emphasis on balance necessarily means that indigenous peoples always have acted or act today just as ecologists might prefer. Indigenous traditions are in this sense as flexible and interpretable as any other set of human mores and just as subject to issues of class and hierarchy. A good example of this is the whale hunt controversy surrounding the Makah Indian Nation of Washington State. There are about 1,100 enrolled Makah living on a remote 27,000-acre reservation across Cape Flattery on Olympic Peninsula in extreme northwest Washington. Despite considerable

debate within the tribe and formidable opposition from environmentalists outside of it, in May 1999 the Makah resurrected a long-dormant tradition and hunted to death a gray whale, an endangered species until 1994. It was done in a fashion the Makah considered ceremonially and ritually appropriate. It reasserted treaty rights allowing the Makah to hunt whales dating back to 1855 but which they had not implemented since the 1920s. For about three decades from about 1860 the Makah had concentrated on commercial sealing until federal protection of seals was inaugurated because of seal depletion. Aside from a lack of gray whales due to commercial culling, a large part of why the Makah stopped whaling in the 1920s was because of an American assimilation drive that included various forms of cultural suppression. To a number of Makah, the resumption of whaling was a means of cultural revitalization, a way of teaching their young about a great Makah ritual heritage and of improving a diet too full of sugar and carbohydrate. In contrast, to a number of ecologically minded protesters, including the militant Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, the Makah were simply stupid for killing a whale while other sources of good food were readily available to them.

A juvenile gray whale was taken by the Makah while Makah women ceremonially lay down as per tradition. The next week the tribe held a large potlatch and invited other tribes. The environmentalist backlash was fierce, persistent, and aggressive, pitting animal rights against Indian "baby whale killing." Over 350 groups from 27 countries opposed the hunt. The President of the Makah Whaling Commission, Keith Johnson, dubbed the response "moral elitism."³⁹ Since 1999 Makah whaling has been piecemeal, family- rather than community-based, and stymied by various lawsuits. The 1999 hunt and subsequent hunts can be seen as a form of strategic essentialism carried out to articulate cultural autonomy in what is a post- or neo-colonial context for Indian peoples within the United States. In this new incarnation of Makah tradition, a gray whale gave its life to help assert and perpetuate Makah identity, an enterprise the majority of Makah felt outweighed other considerations. One might also argue that the Makah whale hunt was environmentally sound on a number of levels. It reinvigorated the Makah community and almost every part of the whale was used, not least the whale's symbolic and intercultural power to highlight a native people's rights to maintain their way of life in whatever sovereign form they chose. A similar determination has at points characterized other ways in which native peoples have given their values voice within Native American Indian literature and art and it is to these we now turn in the chapters that follow.