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Ethnic Vistas: Minorities, the Environment, and the Welfare State

by

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Committee in charge:

Professor Abdul R. JanMohamed, Chair  
Professor Hertha Sweet Wong  
Professor Sau-ling Cynthia Wong

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## Abstract

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by

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This dissertation examines the relationship between race and the environment through three intersecting critical lenses: literature, environmental criticism, and political theory. While minority discourse has traditionally been defined by the experience of negation, I argue that as power becomes increasingly progressive and globalized in the twentieth century, there is a need to revise our geopolitical understanding of racial scapegoating and racial stereotyping. Due to the popularity of the model minority thesis that defined Japanese American exceptionalism against African American delinquency, I focus on a comparative analysis of African American and Japanese American literature that engages the technique of cognitive mapping in order to represent the function of racial minorities in relation to the expansion of the welfare state.

Using Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics as a theoretical framework, I examine how positive and negative racial stereotypes circulated in cultural discourse concerning the future of liberal democracy in the twentieth century. I argue that racial minorities have often functioned to manage the tension within liberal democracy, or the conflict between the centrifugal force of liberal individualism and the centripetal force of democratic communitarianism. Japanese Americans and African Americans have historically been positioned ambiguously as both internal and external to the state, and objectified and subjectified by liberal capitalism. My analysis of what I call minority environmental discourse brings into relief a new critique of the state that differs from traditional right and left critiques that both imagine the state as a threat to civil society; it is not that the state is either enabling or disciplinary, but that it fails to protect and manage the productive potential within marginalized populations. Excavating the point of view of marginalized populations, minority environmental discourse brings into view "fall out" experiences that suggest how the experiences of minorities significantly render visible a critique of the limits within biopolitics, or control that is enforced through what Foucault calls the "optimization of life" that is achieved through passive environmental controls. I examine the aesthetic forms and forms of personhood that are imagined through minority literature's cognitive mapping of the environment as being invested with both energies for resistance to and participation within a globalized progressive social totality.



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## Introduction

In their introduction to the edited anthology, *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* (1990), Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd assert that, “Given such a historically sustained negation of minority voices, we must realize that minority discourse is, in the first instance, the product of damage—damage more or less systematically inflicted on cultures produced as minorities by the dominant culture”; damage comes in the form of economic and cultural destruction, which results in the “eradication” of minoritized peoples.<sup>1</sup> My dissertation, “Ethnic Vistas: Minorities, the Environment, and the Welfare State,” draws from JanMohamed and Lloyd’s basic thesis that minority discourse must be examined through the point of view of damage. I therefore explore the relationship between racial damage and environmental damage in twentieth-century minority literature through the theoretical lens of what Michel Foucault calls (neo)liberal biopolitics, which is an art of government structured through the framing of life itself as the avoidance of damage—economic damage, bodily damage, and social damage. My analysis differs from JanMohamed and Lloyd’s approach to minority discourse in that I argue racial minorities also serve a positive constitutive function in the expansion of liberal democracy in the twentieth century. Which is to suggest that rather than being abolished by damage, racial minorities are constituted through an engagement with damage and function as a tool of progressive politics, which is how I generally define biopolitics in its attempt to manage life based on the liberal economic principles of freedom and security. Rather than limiting damage to minority populations that are externalized by the state, I approach the problem of damage as a general phenomenon that is endemic to capitalist expansion in processes such as the creative destruction of space examined most intensely by cultural geographers.

Whereas much prior analysis has focused attention on the damaging ideological impact of nationalism and citizenship on racialized minorities, I engage the problem from the perspective of the progressive state, which necessitates an examination of the material infrastructure and spatial production that the nation-state facilitates in corroboration with global capitalist expansion. What has been overlooked by both right and left critiques of the state is an engagement with minoritized populations and environments that “fall out” of its increasingly progressive institutions and infrastructure that seek to assimilate and include minoritized populations. The term “fall out” is inspired by Neferti Tadiar’s project of analyzing the neo-colonial Philippines “from the perspective of historical experiences that ‘fall away’ from global capitalist and nation-state narratives of development as well as from social movement narratives of liberation”; the value in Tadiar’s concept is in the basic premise that in global capitalism, the most powerful critique emerges from the understanding that “the historical potential of experience as a social activity lies in its creative character.”<sup>2</sup> The aim of “Ethnic Vistas” is to examine the “creative character” of minority experiences that fall out of the biopolitical “optimization” of life. It argues that minorities, even as they are assimilated into the nation-state, continue to form a population whose “creative character,” what Foucault calls “human capital,” ends up falling out of the “apparatuses of capture minted by capital and state powers to

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<sup>1</sup> Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd, “Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse,” in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, eds. Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Neferti X.M. Tadiar, *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Making of Globalization* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2009), 5,11.



appropriate those creative capacities and their political potential,” and that this process is best illustrated in the minority environmentalist aesthetics of cognitive mapping that not only registers but redefines the relationship between the individual and the world.

Given the nation-state’s and global capitalist domination of space, it is important to theorize minority discourse in relation to the geopolitical uses of the environment; racial minorities are often segregated into specific geopolitical locations that make visible the residue of power in its structuring of space. This imbrication of minorities in space is at heart an environmental problematic; Tadiar asserts the significance of the environment in the context of political struggle as “what Marx understood about land and other natural resources—that they are fundamental to people’s life production and self-production, which, through processes of force as well as capitalist development, both social and technological, they are continually dispossessed of.”<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Foucault argues that more than anything liberalism relies on the concept of nature and environmental control:

political economy does not discover natural rights that exist prior to the exercise of governmentality; it discovers a certain naturalness specific to the practice of government itself... The notion of nature will thus be transformed with the appearance of political economy. For political economy, nature is not an original and reserved region on which the exercise of power should not impinge, on pain of being illegitimate. Nature is something that runs under, through, and in the exercise of governmentality.<sup>4</sup>

For Foucault, liberalism and neoliberalism derive their discursive power from this understanding of power as a natural or self-regulating system, which is furthermore expressed through passive environmental controls. I examine the history of governmental environmentality in relation to representations of nature in minority literature; focusing on literature written during or about three major phases of state expansion—the Progressive Era, the New Deal, and the Great Society—I argue that each phase reveals an ideological association between natural environments and racial identities that facilitates the state’s naturalization of its power. I seek to trace a particular methodology developed in minority literature, what I call minority environmental discourse, which utilizes nature not only as a motif but also as a structuring device that enables a unique methodology of cognitively mapping space, which is essential to its vision of transformative politics.

According to Fredric Jameson, cognitive mapping is essential to the development of a new kind of political art that is able to represent the new and intricate dimensions of a global capitalist social totality.<sup>5</sup> Drawing from Louis Althusser’s definition of ideology as “the representation of the subject’s *Imaginary* relationship to his or her *Real* conditions of existence,” Jameson states that the cognitive map is what allows individuals to develop a “situational representation” of his or her relation to an “unrepresentable totality which is the

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, ed. Michael Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 15-16. Further references to *Birth of Biopolitics* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *BB*.

<sup>5</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, Duke Univ. Press, 1997).

ensemble of the structures of society as a whole.”<sup>6</sup> While Jameson calls for radically new aesthetic forms, I examine how minority literature engages aesthetic forms that have traditionally been used to represent correspondences between lived experience, abstract power, and the environment: naturalism, sentimentalism, regionalism, pastoralism, and gothicism. While the forms are old, minority environmental discourse outlines a new methodology of cognitive mapping that engages an environmental consciousness to represent the abstract and material forces that shape racial identification in order to represent and transform the social totality.

One of the limits to Jameson’s model of cognitive mapping is its failure to address the point of view of racial minorities—or how minoritized consciousness produces a different form of relation to abstract and material space. Chela Sandoval addresses this gap and argues for the application of what she calls differential cognitive mapping techniques that “would engage consciousness, ideology, citizenship, and coalition as masquerade.”<sup>7</sup> The central distinction between Sandoval’s and Jameson’s models of cognitive mapping is that for Sandoval, it is “the citizen-*subject* who interpellates, who calls up ideology, as opposed to Althusser’s formulation, in which it is ‘ideology that interprets the subject.’”<sup>8</sup> In other words, the subject’s point of view, namely “oppositional consciousness,” is what defines the individual’s ability to cognitively map and thereby understand and represent the relationship between the individual and the global capitalist social environment. Drawing from Sandoval’s observation, I examine model minority discourse in the twentieth century in order to theorize how the point of view of the racially minoritized subject enables an aesthetic of cognitive mapping that brings into relief a new perspective of the (neo)liberal state.

I focus on African American and Japanese American literature because the two groups have most commonly been compared in order to define the ideal process of minority assimilation into biopolitical power, the “model minority.” As models, African Americans and Japanese Americans have been ideologically associated with scarce resources, a cultural commodity that is activated in the popular imagination in times of social and economic crisis. I explore the strategic idealism that obtains in popular cultural symbols such as African American “folk” and civil rights activists, and Japanese American entrepreneurs and super-patriotic G.I.s as they appear respectively in Booker T. Washington’s writing, Black Feminist discourse, Nisei or second-generation Japanese American regionalist literature, and John Okada’s post-World War II novel, *No-No Boy* (1957). All of these works represent a process of assimilation into not only the nation’s ideals but into the material institutions and infrastructures of the welfare state. While idealism generally holds sway in nationalistic attitudes of multicultural assimilation, when it comes to equal access to state resources, a series of negative image-symbols arise—black sharecroppers and Welfare Queens, and Japanese American “aliens” and internees. “Ethnic Vistas” examines how what I call minority environmental discourse engages this tension between idealism and exploitation by adopting narrative innovations in cognitive mapping that contest the state’s progressive role in managing races and environments as a way of contributing to the wellbeing of the population.

In my first chapter, I argue that Booker T. Washington reinscribes the popular conception of black folk culture in *Up From Slavery* (1901) and *Working with the Hands; being a Sequel to*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>7</sup> Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2000), 30.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

*Up from Slavery* (1904). While black folk culture was famously idealized in W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Washington's idealization of the folk pushes African American identification with nature beyond the natural realm and I argue, to a techno-natural time-space that assumes the charge of black nature so long as nature is generally understood to include the second-order nature, the organic institutions and infrastructures, provided by the welfare state. Aesthetically innovative for its overturning of the southern pastoral, Washington's work brings into relief the exclusion of African Americans from Progressive nature and human conservation measures. As a solution, he presents cognitive maps of techno-natural spaces where the popular metaphor of a "separate but equal state" is transformed most famously into a symbol of the hand as a prosthetic symbol of the state, "separate as the fingers yet one as the hand." I argue that this organ(ic) image cognitively maps how African Americans are positively identified with both a democratic nature, a "separate" social sphere idealized as a pre-civilizational "folk," and capitalist exploitation, the subjection of black sharecroppers in their mutual participation in "one" global capitalist system. Washington here presents the stereotype of African American folk as what environmental critic Ursula Heise calls a "visual shorthand" that makes the perception of global environmental processes possible. I examine Washington's participation in the discourse of women's municipal reform and the aesthetics of domestic sentimentalism that enable him to environmentally map black folk energies that fall out of dominant controls. Marshalling these unused productive capacities, Washington seeks to reinsert the African American population into the Progressive agenda as an organic population-resource necessary for the expansion of liberal democracy through its management of the tensions between capitalist exploitation and democratic preservation of life.

I examine Washington's aesthetic strategies through the lens of the central contradiction in the Progressive era—the increasing violence against African Americans concomitant with the 1896 *Plessey v. Ferguson* ruling occurs at a historical crossroads when power was becoming more progressive with the rise of Progressive human and nature conservation movements that generally functioned through the protection of life as a mode of expanding power. I argue that this seeming contradiction must be examined as an environmental problematic; when examined from an environmental perspective, one begins to see a broader spatial logic to a seemingly irrational racial hostility—the New South as a geopolitical region was for the most part externalized from the nation-state as it was used for primitive accumulation by foreign and national capitalist interest, while Progressive conservationism succeeded in protecting and preserving natural environments in the West and the Northeast. Spatially, what is revealed is less a contradiction and more an inherent tension within biopolitics in its method of managing and protecting populations and environments, biopolitics reduces populations and natural environments to the value of a resource to be used. Thus it is the underside of biopolitics, the reduction of human life to a form of capital, what Foucault calls "human capital," in which individuals are viewed as an "abilities-machine," that the degradation of African American life illuminates. In this form of power, African American life is both affirmed as being in need of protection and debased in the form of a usable resource. Washington works within the dynamics of biopolitical power in his cognitive mapping of the Black Belt as an organic solution to the tensions within biopolitical discourse heightened by post-frontier scarcity, indeed illustrating how there can still be life after sublation into a form of capital.

In my second chapter, I assert that Japanese American regionalist sketches written during and about Depression-era California significantly revise American literary regionalism and its idealization of "natural" regions and ethnic differences. The popular conception of cultural

pluralism dominated New Deal cultural projects that sought to represent the rural regions of the U.S. as safe havens from the crisis of the Great Depression. Japanese American writers emerged just as the West was defining its own ethnic regional literatures as a part of this national mosaic. Developing a cognitive mapping technique that brings into relief an impasse between the natural and the social, Toshio Mori, Hisaye Yamamoto, and Wakako Yamauchi each call into question the very *naturalness* of California's agrarian landscape; it is not so much that the individual is alienated from nature, but that nature itself has become artificially reproduced and alienated as California's "factories in the fields." Hisaye Yamamoto's *Seventeen Syllables* (1988), and Wakako Yamauchi's *Songs My Mother Taught Me* (1994) nostalgically question the New Deal's capacity to preserve the natural environment in its fostering of an exploitative relationship that both Yamamoto and Yamauchi attempt to resolve through their gendering of nature. Farming fathers' assimilation into "nature" is what causes their exploitation, while mothers inscribe an alternative cultural representation of nature through art. The dilettante figure, or the failed artist, in Mori's short story collections, *Yokohama, California* (1949) and *The Chauvinist* (1979), represents the incomplete liberation that results from the demand that Japanese immigrants assimilate into an entrepreneurial class that humanized transnational capitalist expansion in agriculture.

In addition, I examine the seeming contradiction between Japanese exclusion, with the alien land laws, and inclusion, with the birth of the second generation, of this minority ethnic group in the discourse of democratic pluralism. When examined through the experiences of the Japanese immigrant community, these seemingly contradictory approaches of inclusion and exclusion become visible as the expansion of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call U.S. Empire through "network power," which includes processes of "expansion" and "inclusion"; Hardt and Negri argue that the U.S. developed this unique method by which the nation-state was able to preserve liberal democracy, which was experiencing a global crisis in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. I explore how the immigration and assimilation of the Japanese in California were processes essential to the preservation of liberal democracy, namely through the group's racial identification with the natural environment. The alien land laws participated in the "expansion" of available land by excluding the environmental menace that was the Japanese immigrant agricultural worker, while the "inclusion" of the second generation reinforced the democratic ideal of pluralism. Mori, Yamamoto, and Yamauchi represent how as an ethnic culture of nature, the Japanese American community was bound up in the strategies of network power that functioned through the dual process of environmental integration (assimilation of American born Japanese as model citizens) and expansion (exclusion of Japanese access to agrarian land to open up more land for citizens). I assert that ideologies of race and nature in this period, particularly in relation to Japanese American assimilation, functioned as part of the logics that transformed citizenship in response to the spatial problem of post-frontier scarcity that gave impetus to the global crisis of liberal democracy. The U.S. welfare state establishes itself in this moment of crisis; in particular, Progressive educators in California turned to the Japanese American student population to expand a discourse of natural exemplarity that embodied a new type of American citizen no longer bound to Jeffersonian ideals of agrarian land ownership. In its stead, the Japanese American student, in the eyes of social scientists, embodied progressive ideals of individual creative potential wherein the subject learns to take himself or herself as the productive property that ensures individual freedom. In other words, Progressives helped to transform concepts of citizenship in order to make citizenship more amenable to the logic of liberal capitalism. This is a process that Foucault associates with the biopolitical art of

government in which liberal economic values are marshaled to manage all levels of social organization.

My third chapter explores how an examination of space brings into relief increasingly covert racial controls that persist with progressive state expansion in John Okada's post-war novel *No-No Boy* (1957). Spatial degradation in the post-war Japanese-American community in Seattle is contrasted with the city's modern infrastructure (highways, VA hospital, university) that creates a "natural" circuit to manage and promote the lives of returning Japanese American veterans. The rise in the post-war of modernization efforts both domestically and globally continues to rely on a racial ideology that becomes increasingly invisible or color-blind as it becomes linked with concepts of global human rights and liberal economic development or underdevelopment. Yet through a reiteration of spatial similarities in the state's production of space, the novel traces the hidden historical relationship between progressive institutions, internment camps, the ethnic ghetto, and the worker rehabilitation center. In this way, *No-No Boy* brings into relief the central role that the internment of people of Japanese ancestry during World War II played in conjoining the aims of welfare into the aims of a warfare state. Assuming the charge of the Japanese American subject position as a suturing mechanism for liberal warfare and democratic welfare, *No-No Boy* radically explores the point of view of the subjective contradiction between racial naturalism, or the racial hatred that often fuels warfare, and the international cultural dominance of minority rights or color-blind inclusion. Explored as an internal psychic contradiction, the conflict between nature and the social totality in the novel brings into relief the central function that race plays in this new expression of power namely through the flexible nature of racial identification with the opposing logics of liberal democracy.

The novel explores the role that racial identification plays in the social rationalization of the spatial contradictions that globalization creates. *No-No Boy* thereby situates the racial subject and the problem of race at the center of what Hardt and Negri call a postmodern form of control that functions through the conflicting spatial and social dynamics of inclusion and expansion. *No-No Boy* investigates the postmodern nature of race in the post-war era, or how it becomes the individual's responsibility to successfully navigate spatial contradictions and to successfully liberate himself from a potentially dangerous and imprisoning environment. Race becomes central to this narrative because this spatial drama is most visible ethnic conflict—in the novel the conflict between the Japanese immigrant community and the African American community in Seattle's ethnic ghetto visually rationalizes the processes of capitalist creative destruction that creates havoc on social life as a private struggle. What results is a dominant epistemology of space that attributes spatial and social degradation to the privatized conflict between competing ethnic cultural values. As *No-No Boy*'s protagonist, Ichiro Yamada, moves between the racialized space of the ethnic ghetto and the implicitly racial spaces of the modern abstract state, his point of view reveals the mutual imbrication of these seemingly opposite spaces within the cultural logic of global capital. The state's role in this process is examined through the novel's emphasis on the progressive policy measure that gave social welfare benefits exclusively to military veterans, the G.I. Bill; the novel cognitively maps how the expansion of progressive policies actually functioned to truncate universal access to state policies that ostensibly benefit the population. Only the select group of Japanese American veterans who agreed to serve in the U.S. military are represented as having access to as well as deserving university education and health care. In contrast, as a draft resister, Ichiro struggles to either find his way back into the progressive institutions of the state or to accept his marginalized status. Posed as a progressive problem of free choice, Ichiro's dilemma directly mirrors his experience in the internment camps

where progressive sociologists along with the military inscribed racial identification and citizenship as contingent upon the individual's freedom to choose. Of course, such a paradigm ultimately undermines the very nature of citizenship as a legal and political identification, and it is deeply embedded with liberal values that facilitated the expansion of postmodern social control through the privatization of citizenship, which in turn makes citizens more amenable to processes of inclusion and expansion and more spatially malleable.

In my final chapter, I examine Black Feminist discourse and its innovative cognitive mapping of environmental crisis. In conflating environmental devastation with the toxicity of racism, Black Feminist discourse provides the most salient critique of neo-liberal environmentalism. I examine works by Toni Cade Bambara, Audre Lorde, and Alice Walker in order to unpack a relatively unrecognized critique of neo-liberalism in Black Feminist environmental narratives that represent the environment as the text's political unconscious. More specifically, these texts re-inscribe the dominant neo-liberal conceptions of risk and what Foucault calls "care of the self," which suggests that it is the individual's responsibility to protect himself or herself from risk, while it is the responsibility of the government to provide individuals with the economic means to do so, namely through the possession of private property which includes individual skills and knowledge that Foucault calls "human capital." For Bambara, damage and healing are scripted as part of the "ecology of the self," a complex subterranean communication and virtual visualization technology that exceeds and subverts biopolitical control. Bambara's novel *The Salt Eater* schematizes the point of view of the black feminist activist as a self-conscious appropriation of innate human capacities to register and navigate the consequences of time-space compression, which is what Harvey describes as the experiential crises of time and space that follows the expansion of global capitalism.

Rather than eliding history, Walker's novel *Meridian*'s artifactual treatment of nature facilitates an alternative chronicling of women's lives; stories themselves represent the agonistic expansion of *Meridian*'s point of view as a form of "natural" growth that deepens one's experience of time within a specific space. This heightened experience of time-space, described as "ecstasy" allows the political activist to confront death. Indeed the agonistic process of death and rebirth remains singular to the civil rights activist and links the activist back into a correspondence with nature and its magical productive capacity for rebirth and regeneration. Likewise, Bambara's novel *The Salt Eater* represents individual point of view as functioning through a natural mechanism of time-space compression. Through shifting and multiple points of view, the novel illustrates how the individual is never completely located in one specific time-space as memories and associations are constantly being ignited through contact the individual has with other points of view that are presented either in the environment or by the random and not so random conversations and interactions that one has with others. *The Salt Eater* brilliantly constructs cognitive maps as pedagogical tools for its readers that outline how precisely the power of what Hardt and Negri call the multitude is to be reappropriated; these maps illustrate how individual point of view is constituted through the ongoing dialogue between multiple points of views and experiences of time-space that exceed biopolitical management. In other words, the individual's creative capacity is constantly expanding individual consciousness, which is a process that in the novel lies at the heart of the multitude's radical potential.

These narrative innovations that link narrative cognitive mapping to the creation of spatial and environmental history function as pedagogical tools that teach readers how to hold disparate spatial points of view, namely the relation between local and global and material and imaginary space, which is necessary to navigate a world that is increasingly defined by neo-

liberal risk. I assert that with the expansion of the progressive state, racial minorities are managed in a much more complex and contradictory manner than simple scapegoating. With what Foucault calls “the death of man,” with the emergence of social sciences that treat man as an object of study, liberalism, as a corollary economic phenomenon, treats the management of human populations as it would a natural resource. Cultural geographer Neil Smith has noted that there appears to be a cultural contradiction in the dual tendency to idealize nature and to exploit nature that he attributes to the geographical expansion of capitalism. It is this violent dynamic of idealism *and* exploitation in liberal democratic racial and environmental discourse that I explore in my comparison of the African American and Japanese American literature. My analysis of racial politics evokes the parallel paths between discourses of race and nature, which address how and why environmentalism like racial politics must come to terms with its emergence within and articulation of biopolitical power.

## Chapter One

### ‘Seeing Like a State’: Sentimentalism, Prosthesis, and Organicism in Booker T. Washington’s New South

Concluding his survey of environmental literature, Lawrence Buell asserts that the durability of environmental criticism “rests on its having introduced a fresh topic or perspective or archive rather than in distinctive methods of inquiry.”<sup>9</sup> In this chapter, I challenge Buell’s assertion by recasting Booker T. Washington’s work through the lens of environmentalism. Washington’s role in combating environmental racism, food injustice, and discriminatory public health policies has been vastly overlooked due to his nefarious reputation as an accommodating “Uncle Tom.” Beyond upending the popular post-bellum Southern pastoral that nostalgically glamorized plantation life, Washington’s evocations of nature as a motif in his work function on a formal level to construct new methods of mapping an environment that was fraught by deep social, political, and economic fault-lines. His environmentalist critique in *Up From Slavery* (1901) and *Working with the Hands; being a Sequel to ‘Up From Slavery* (1904) schematizes a radically new way of mapping the environment that anticipates the contemporary environmentalist movement’s utilization of representational strategies to bring into view a global perspective that Ursula Heise calls “eco-cosmopolitanism.”

In this chapter, I explore how Washington develops an eco-cosmopolitan perspective through his exploration of the racial stereotype as a complex environmental symbol that functions like what Heise and others have recognized as the “visual shorthand” that makes the representation of global environmental risk possible; polar bears and oil-covered sea birds, for example, enable the average citizen to comprehend the consequences of an otherwise ungraspable scale of environmental damage to whole ecosystems and planetary life.<sup>10</sup> Scholars have similarly argued that the racial stereotype, most notably in American literary naturalism, is often used as a visual synecdoche of capitalist globalization, which is an unrepresentable social totality. If race, like the natural visual shorthand of contemporary environmentalism, functions to allow citizens to understand, to conceptualize their relationship to “the world,” then it is necessary to begin to theorize race and nature as interrelated methods or modes of cognition (what Michel Foucault calls “transactional realities”) rather than as essences or strictly material entities that require protection, management, or externalization. I examine how *Up From Slavery* and *Working with the Hands* utilize stereotypes of black folk identification with nature to construct a cognitive map of racial integration as a radical geopolitical revisioning of the social welfare state, which ultimately presents a powerful critique of the state and capitalist domination of the environment.

What Washington’s work brings to bear on environmental consciousness is the constitutive role that representations of race play in the formation and perception of the environment. The Progressive era marks a key shift in power from an explicitly repressive regime based on the literal enslavement of African Americans, to a more liberal form of power based at least nominally on managing the wellbeing of the population and its productive energy through the management of the environment itself, what Foucault calls biopolitics. In a way,

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<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 130.

<sup>10</sup> Ursula Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 37.



progressive control treats people as an endangered species in a fragile habitat; Foucault writes that biopolitics entails “control over relations between the human race, or human beings insofar as they are species, insofar as they are living beings, and their environment, the milieu in which they live. This includes the different effects of the geographical, climactic, or hydrographic environment,” which at the same time addresses “the problem of the environment to the extent that it is not a natural environment, that it has been created by the population and therefore has effects on the environment.”<sup>11</sup> Environmentalism or what Buell has analyzed as environmentality, constitutes one of the undertheorized facets of what Foucault calls the biopolitical art of government, which is generally understood as this progressive form of power that expands not through overt repression but through its aim to “optimize a state of life.”<sup>12</sup> The expansion of biopolitical power is evident for instance in Progressive Conservationism, which represents the First Wave of environmental activism in the United States responsible for the protection of bioregions with the preservation of watersheds and natural parks and nature preserves, the creation of large infrastructure projects such as the building of dams for hydroelectric power and irrigation projects that expanded arable land in the West, and the general implementation of scientific techniques of managing the nation’s natural resources.

Yet Progressive conceptions of nature have commonly been criticized for its conflation between conservation and preservation, between the use of nature and the restriction of its use; a similar duality is glaringly present in attitudes towards racial minorities during the Progressive era—the one major factor that mars this otherwise celebrated phase in American liberal democracy is the re-entrenchment of racist politics with the 1896 Supreme Court ruling in *Plessey v. Ferguson* that formalized a separate but equal state and signaled what many believe to be the nadir of African American civil rights. It is a bitter irony that while local communities and the federal government sought to protect public health as well as the health of the environment, the African American population was also subjected to explicitly racist oppression that threatened both their health and wellbeing. With the massive rise in lynchings in the South and the entrenchment of a system of debt peonage that perpetuated a state of virtual slavery for poor farmers, African Americans continued to be externalized by the state. This is a phenomenon that Foucault identifies with biopolitics; racism enables the population to purge itself of imagined contamination and thereby maintain its sense of health and wellbeing.<sup>13</sup> The Environmental Justice movement addresses this facet of biopolitics, shedding light on how environmental risks are disproportionately allocated or externalized to communities of color. In my analysis of Washington’s work, I attempt to trace a different and new kind of racism, one that survives *within* the biopolitical state through the assimilation rather than expulsion of racial minorities. This is not to say that African Americans were not also scapegoated and subjected to overt and extreme violence, but to argue that alongside this type of coercion, what emerges in the Progressive era is a new method of dealing with racial minorities as a constitutive part of the biopolitical state in the sense that minority populations are also on some level deemed productive members of society whose lives must be defended and protected.

Hence, it becomes possible that alongside overt acts of racism, positive stereotypes of African American identity also gain cultural currency—the two most popular “positive”

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<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, *‘Society Must be Defended’: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 245.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 254-255.

stereotypes of this era are embodied by Washington himself and his nemesis, W.E.B. Du Bois. A great example of two different ideals of African American assimilation is found in the historic education debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois: Washington argued for the *necessity* of liberal accommodationism to ensure economic survival on the one hand, while Du Bois advocated political resistance and what Washington imagined to be a culturally *extravagant* form of education in liberal arts, what many believe to be a more nuanced approach to the survival of African Americans in this country.<sup>14</sup> I argue that the polarity between themes of *necessity* and *extravagance* in African American cultural production illustrates how racialized subjects create a virtual map that defines quite naturally the *positive* internal limits of liberal democratic freedom; Washington idealizes black folk identification with the ideal of entrepreneurial freedom and Du Bois idealizes black folk identification with the ideal of democratic equality. My analysis of race's ideological function in the twentieth century addresses this pressing conflict that remains present in the contemporary identification of ethnicity with nature—the extent to which the polarization in racial identity as well as in the uses of nature helps to suture together the right hand and the left hand of the state.

With the rise of liberal democracy in the Progressive era, the tension between liberal individualism and democratic pluralism threatens to destroy the cohesion of the nation-state. African Americans as a racialized population embody this tension not as a contradiction but as an internal duality (and a duality in black folk culture) between two opposing ideals: accommodationists like Washington favor economic liberalism, and civil rights activists like Du Bois favor the political culture of democracy. More importantly, and what is more relevant for the point that I am trying to make, is that when examined from a spatial perspective, the racial dynamics in Progressivism appear less as a contradiction and more consistent with the broad-scale entrenchment of geographical environmental norms established in this era; federal conservation efforts treated the South as a region used primarily for resource extraction, the West was managed by a series of water development projects that encouraged industrialized agriculture, and measures in the Northeast secured the urban population's access to natural resources like clean food and drinking water. The state extended and preserved its power by enforcing what Edward Soja has described as capitalism's intensification and extensification of space—it extended its management over greater portions of the nation's environment and intensified space by creating amplified usage and by establishing greater regional differentiations.<sup>15</sup> In this way space continued to expand despite the official closing of the frontier heralded by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893.

Washington maps the racial divide onto these broader global environmental divisions of space, resonating with geopolitical theories that were being popularized by a growing consciousness of post-frontier scarcity. In 1895, two years after Turner's publication of his *Frontier Thesis*, Washington, in his most famous speech given at the Atlanta Cotton States and

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<sup>14</sup> The terms are borrowed from Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's thematization of Asian American literature through the polarity of "necessity" and "extravagance" in *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993). In noting a similar dynamic articulated in the education debates between Washington and Du Bois, I suggest that this polarity points to how racial minorities are assimilated into the nation-state to outline the limit-conditions of liberal democratic freedom rather than suggesting the inherent qualities of racialized subjects.

<sup>15</sup> See my analysis of Soja in Chapter Three.

International Exposition, signaled his fluency in geopolitical statecraft: “A ship lost at sea for many days,” Washington incanted, “suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, ‘Water, water; we die of thirst!’ The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, ‘Cast down your bucket where you are.’”<sup>16</sup> Often dismissed as a symbolic acquiescence to the compromise of Jim Crow, Washington’s metaphor of a ship lost at sea invokes the dominant geopolitical thinker of his time—Alfred Thayer Mahan, the British contemporary of Frederick Jackson Turner, who popularized the importance of sea power following the closing of the world’s frontiers in *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783*, which was published in 1890, five years prior to the Atlanta address. Both invoking and denying sea power as a viable mode of expansion, suggesting that travel to the Amazon River is an unnecessary search for the “fresh, sparkling water” that is available in abundance on land, Washington’s anecdote of the ship lost at sea favors the heartland thesis proposed by a competing geopolitician, Halford Mackinder, who “urged statesmen to look shoreward, to the earth’s great land masses...considering the globe as a completed and now closed political system.”<sup>17</sup>

Arguing that power could no longer expand outward, Mackinder urged states to turn inward to secure agricultural lands and resources (*HE*, 4). Washington implicitly relates this new consciousness of a hermetic geopolitical environment to the management of racial difference through the separate but equal state. Repeating the vocative call to “cast down your buckets” identically and yet separately for blacks and whites in the audience, each call at the same time contains within it a different message for blacks and whites. What unifies both groups is this relation to the soil and the demand to secure agricultural land through an extensification of use: for blacks, this is seen as a return to collective life, the “common labour” and “common occupations of life” in “tilling a field,” and for whites, black labor reinforces a sense of national indigeneity and organicism, being unlike “those of foreign birth and strange tongue” (*UFS*, 100). Through his use of this anecdote, Washington intriguingly develops a cognitive map of the separate but equal state as an organic solution to post-frontier scarcity.

German geopolitician, Friedrich Ratzel infused Mackinder’s emphasis on land with German conceptions of state organicism and biological determinism articulated in his influential *Politische Geographie*, published in 1897 (*HE*, 6-7). David Thomas Murphy writes that, “The nation in an ethnic sense, or *Volk*, was as essential to the land in Ratzel’s concept of the interaction of politics and geography. From the symbiotic interaction between the two elements of *Boden* and *Volk* the state acquired its organic nature, its character as a life form” (*HE*, 9). Murphy asserts that for Ratzel, “Like other life forms, states possessed organs, which might or might not be sound and healthy. Chief among these organs, for Ratzel, was the *Grenze*, which may be interpreted as ‘frontier’ or ‘border.’ This he described as the skin of the state” (*HE*, 10).

Within the context of the rise in geopolitical thought, Washington’s choice of the bodily metaphor of the hand to describe the separation of the state is significant. Depicting his espousal of “separate but equal” through the organic metaphor, “separate as the fingers, yet one as the

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<sup>16</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 99. Further references to *Up From Slavery* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *UFS*.

<sup>17</sup> David Thomas Murphy, *The Heroic Earth: Geopolitical Thought in West Germany, 1918-1933* (Kent: Kent State Univ. Press, 1997), 2-4. Further references to *Heroic Earth* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *HE*.

hand,” rhetorically resonates with Ratzel’s Hegelian notion of organic unity in difference. Washington states that “In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress” (*UFS*, 100). Fragmenting the popular phrase “separate as the fingers of the hand” into two seemingly independent clauses, Washington’s statement on the surface emphasizes separation but implicitly enforces unity; being “separate as the fingers of the hand” is commonly understood to signify the false sense of difference since fingers are not separate from the hand. While this moment in his speech is generally understood as the expression of Washington’s willingness to accept segregation, I argue that its deeper environmental and geopolitical implications have been overlooked. The distinction between races through the prosthetics of the hand as a prophylactic symbol of the state, both maintains a separation between the “purely social” or civic life, and what he calls “mutual progress” or economic life, and reaffirms the organic unity between these seemingly contradictory aspects of the nation-state—its democratic foundation in communitarianism and its individualistic foundation in liberal capitalism. The hand thereby presents a cognitive map of the geopolitical strategy of the progressive state that uses racial difference to establish a state of equilibrium between liberal capitalism’s centrifugal force and democracy’s centripetal force.

In addition, Washington’s aesthetic strategy of re-presenting the organic relation between people, the land, and the state through anecdotes points to his reliance on romantic sentimentalism, a literary mode that privileges direct experience particularly through an engagement with nature as a form of truth. What follows is my analysis of Washington’s use of sentimentalism as a literary mode of biopolitics, which Foucault argues is deeply rooted in the liberal tradition of establishing truth in the “nature” of the market system:

In liberalism this truth is found in the market. Whereas in the seventeenth century the market was a site of justice, of regulation and the protection from fraud, in the mid-eighteenth century it no longer functioned this way, the market instead became the central expression of the natural, and the need to obey natural laws (*BB*, 30-31).

Anecdotes participate in this dominant cultural bias in biopolitical power, linking truths to natural material evidence, and in Washington’s hands, that nature is always in the end related to the truth of African American economic exceptionalism. I also examine the indebtedness of Washington’s sentimental aesthetics to women’s reform literature and the Progressive women’s environmental movement. The women’s movement is essential to my understanding of how Washington works within existing power relations and dominant conceptions of race and nature as “transactional realities” that help to manage the population through passive environmental controls. This is a strategy popularized in women’s reform—to work within the constitutive and enabling structures of a biopolitical form of power that in my view is the basis of the Progressive state and its expansion through the explicit management of life. The women’s reform movement discovers loopholes in this type of management, locations or moments where women’s productive energies fail to be harnessed.

I argue that Washington locates similar “fall out” experiences, where the state or the economy fails to fully grasp the productive potential within African American life. In so far as African Americans also possess inalienable forms of human capital (creativity, resourcefulness, and the cultural capital of folk identification with nature), they represent a necessary population that contributes to the management of the destabilizing forces within liberal capitalism that

threatens liberal democracy.<sup>18</sup> Washington's attempts to organize this excess of energy, I argue, is a perversion of power rather than a direct resistance to it that is most notable in his appropriation of the language of women's reform, the use of sentimentalism that attributes women's alternative political power to their association with romantic notions of nature. Co-opting the function of sentimentalism in women's discourse, Washington proposes a radical kinship and identification between black folk nature and the technologies of the nation-state, including the material infrastructure of the state itself. At the same time, he develops a unique aesthetic form that explores environmental consciousness as a mode of racial uplift. In this way, Washington's work significantly revises Donna Haraway's theory of the cyborg's identification with the posthuman world, suggesting that the formation of posthuman kinship bonds is necessarily an environmental and racial act that imaginatively and literally remakes the world.

### **Natural Resources and the Spatial Geography of the Minority Environment**

Overtly, Progressive reforms administer what Foucault addresses as the "targets" of biopolitical power, "the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population" as well as "insurance, individual and collective savings" and "safety measures."<sup>19</sup> The logistics of this form of management necessarily entails management of "the effects of the environment."<sup>20</sup> As noted earlier, geographical-environmental analysis of federal conservation policies reveals shocking disparities in the Progressive agenda particularly with regard to women and African Americans. The Progressive Conservation movement in large part ignored the rural South and facilitated the entrenchment of regional differentiations of space, where the South was relegated to the status of a colony used for resource extraction, while indigenous populations were removed from the land in order to establish "wilderness" areas in the West.<sup>21</sup> Compelled by the publication of George Perkins Marsh's pioneering conservationist text *Man and Nature* in 1864, the government established its first national park in the Yosemite Valley that same year, which was followed by the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 and the formation of the National Forestry Commission in 1873.<sup>22</sup> As the federal government's first forestry agent, Franklin B. Hough studied the rapid destruction of the nation's forests in a four-volume *Report Upon Forestry* (1885). With the recognition that forests were necessary for the water supply in the Northeast, what originated as a movement to preserve the "natural" wilderness in the West quickly evolved into a movement to save the Adirondack Mountains as a state forest preserve in 1885 (it became a state park in 1894).

Historian Van C. Woodward cites a marked contrast in Federal land policy towards Southern states from 1866 and 1867 to 1877 and 1878. While in 1866, the federal sale of land was restricted for homesteaders, with a limited grant size of 80 acres, in 1876, an act repealed all

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<sup>18</sup> Chantal Mouffe addresses the contradiction between liberalism and democracy in *The Democratic Paradox* (London and New York: Verso, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, 'Society Must be Defended,' 243-244.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>21</sup> William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> David Stradling, preface to *Conservation in the Progressive Era: Classic Texts* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2004), 3-4.

limitations so that the lands were opened to unrestricted cash entry.<sup>23</sup> Woodward estimates 5,692,259 acres of Federal lands were sold between 1877 and 1878. The Southern Homestead Act of 1866 was so mismanaged that lumbermen were able to use their workers to file claims to public land; these lands were then stripped of timber and abandoned.<sup>24</sup> To add insult to injury, Federal-land sales were outstripped by state-land sales in the South (*ONS*, 117). Between 1881 and 1888, 86 percent of lands sold in the south were acquired by northern lumbermen and dealers.<sup>25</sup> While in the South the federal government facilitated what people like J.F. Duggar recognized as “probably the most rapid and reckless destruction of forests known to history,” its policies regarding the western and northeastern regions of the nation reflected growing federal interest in environmental and human conservation (*ONS*, 118).

The domestic sphere was also expelled from federal progressive policies that focused on “primitive” wilderness regions and resource extraction processes as the primary concern for its environmental policies. Federal participation in Progressive conservation privileged white male-dominated corporations, agricultural experiment stations, and environmental engineers and did not consider women’s public health as part of its environmental reforms. Cultural associations between charity and “women’s natural urge to nurture” also fueled the women’s reform movement and allowed women to expand the popular conception of environmentalism to its contemporary definition by the Environmental Justice Movement—the places in which we live, work, and play.<sup>26</sup> Mary Templin points out that women’s benevolence organizations addressed the absence of federal social welfare programs, asserting that “[i]n an era without federal or state welfare systems—it was not until two decades later, following the Panic of 1857, that a public employment program was even proposed (not adopted) in New York.”<sup>27</sup> Local charity and some state programs emerged to fund a “widow’s pension” programs for single mothers.<sup>28</sup> Then with the culmination of Progressive ideals in the federal policies of the New Deal, single mothers were further segregated in inferior programs of the welfare state considered pejoratively as “charity”; the Social Security program that provided a social safety net for the middle class was well-funded and considered an earned privilege and a right, while the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program remained under-funded and stigmatized.<sup>29</sup>

African Americans were similarly excluded from welfare policies like the Social Security Act of 1935, which passed with a coalition between progressives and Southern Democrats who demanded that black sharecroppers and domestic workers mainly in the South be considered

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<sup>23</sup> Van C. Woodward, *Origins of the New South 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2006), 116. Further references to *Origins of the New South* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *ONS*.

<sup>24</sup> Albert E. Cowdry, *This Land, This South: An Environmental History* (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1996), 111.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Templin, “‘Dedicated to Works of Beneficence’: Charity as Model for a Domesticated Economy in Antebellum Women’s Panic Fiction,” in *Our Sister’s Keepers: Nineteenth-Century Benevolence Literature by American Women*, eds. Jill Bergman and Debra Bernardi (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>28</sup> Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-6.

ineligible for participation in Social Security.<sup>30</sup> Both of these instances reflect a history of minority exclusion from equal access to the protective institutions of the fledgling federal welfare system. The welfare state itself reproduced existing social norms by creating a two-tier state that reproduced dominant racial and gender biases as the “norms” of society and had the material impact of maintaining spatial segregation.<sup>31</sup> Although the “birth” of the welfare state is commonly located in the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, I examine the importance of analyzing the historical relationship between social welfare and the nation-state’s management of natural resources and its treatment of women and African Americans in the Progressive era, which I assert reflect similar tendencies for bias against minorities in conservation policies of general environmental management.

Eco-feminist scholar Carolyn Merchant argues that the scientific domination of nature that gave impetus to the demand for resource extraction goes hand in hand with the domination of women. Merchant in her path-breaking work, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (1983) observes a startling connections between the birth of modern science, the capitalist exploitation of nature, and the degradation of women. Recognized as the father of modern science, Francis Bacon, according to Merchant, imagined the subjugation of the earth to be rationally related to the torture of women in the European witch-hunts. Merchant cites a compelling example from Bacon’s “De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum,” in which referring to James I, he makes explicit comparisons between the methods by which witches were tortured in inquisition and the scientific investigation of nature. Bacon writes, “For you have but to follow and as it were hound nature in her wanderings, and you will be able when you like to lead and drive her afterward to the same place again. . . . Neither ought a man to make scruple of entering and penetrating into these holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is his whole object—as your majesty has shown in your own example.”<sup>32</sup>

Luxemborgian feminist scholar, Maria Mies draws from Merchant’s work to reveal the intersection between the subjugation of women and the subjugation of colonized peoples and slaves based upon their mutual exploitation and externalization as forms of nature. Mies urges the necessity to

trace the ‘undreground connections that link the process by which nature was exploited and put under man’s domination to the process by which women in Europe were subordinated, and examine the process by which these two were linked to the conquest and colonization of other lands and people. . . . [B]oth the persecution of the witches and the rise of modern science have to be linked to the slave trade and the destruction of subsistence economies in the colonies.’<sup>33</sup>

According to Mies, the dispossession of women parallels racialized dispossession wrought by colonialism in the sense that both women and racial others were objectified as “natural” sources

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<sup>30</sup> Jill Quadagno, *The Transformation of Old Age Security: Class and Politics in the American Welfare State* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> For example, Quadagno addresses this phenomenon in the Federal Housing Administration’s practice of “redlining” that “reinforced a rigid color line” (*The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermiend the War on Poverty* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994], 23-24).

<sup>32</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature” Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1983), 168.

<sup>33</sup> Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1986), 77.

for what Karl Marx calls primitive accumulation. While Merchant and Mies importantly locate how women and the colonized are mutually objectified and exploited in the rise of modern science and capitalist accumulation, both fail to address an important duality in the ideology of nature itself, a duality that cultural geographer Neil Smith argues emerged with the rise of the bourgeois ideology of nature.

Like Mies, Smith locates Bacon as a key culprit in the scientific domination of nature and its promulgation of the idea that nature is “explicitly external to human society; it is an object to be mastered and manipulated.”<sup>34</sup> But Smith asserts that, on the other hand, nature is also clearly universal, “alongside external nature we have human nature, by which is implied that human beings and their social behaviours are every bit as natural as the so-called external aspects of nature.”<sup>35</sup> Women, according to Smith, embody this contradiction because nature has historically been feminized:

As external nature, women are objects which mankind attempts to dominate and oppress, ravage and romanticize; they are objects of conquest and penetration as well as idolatry and worship...But women can never be wholly external since in them resides fertility and the means of biological reproduction. In this sense they are made elements of universal nature, mothers and nurturers, possessors of a mysterious ‘female intuition’ and so on.<sup>36</sup>

While Mies does show how women’s reproductive capacity was externalized and utilized as a resource for capitalist accumulation, Smith’s insistence on the duality of nature and therefore of women’s identification with nature is significant, particularly because it points to how the external (degraded) and the universal (sacred) conceptions of nature appear to be in opposition, but actually create a dialectical unity, which Smith goes on to show through his analysis of the national park concept where the production of universal nature facilitates belief in the availability of limitless resources in nature for externalization, use, and consumption. I take up Smith’s analysis where he leaves off, and examine to what extent this dual identification with nature exists for minoritized groups that, as Mies notes, have also been traditionally associated with the exploitation of nature as a resource for imperialist state expansion.

The dual conception of nature reflects a larger tension in liberal democracy between the liberal capitalist privileging of externalizing nature as a resource to be commodified, and the democratic communitarian idealization of the land as a symbol of the sacred coherent nation-space; Smith distinguishes the two as the bourgeois differentiation between external nature and poetic representations of nature as universal.<sup>37</sup> The Progressive conservation movement dealt with this duality in the discourse of nature by adopting different approaches to different regions: water development alongside the preservation of wilderness in the West, and the material externalization of the South as a region used primarily for resource extraction as if it were a colony.

A similar method of geographical segregation is evident in the isolation of women in the domestic sphere to manage, by gendering, the ideological conflict between democratic communitarianism as a feminized realm and the male domain of liberal individualism. Yet a

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<sup>34</sup> Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>37</sup> I examine Neil Smith’s analysis of the dual conception of nature in Chapter Two.



deeper dualism defines the domestic sphere itself as it becomes identified with a realm of nature that exists outside the corrupt world of monopoly finance capital. Jane Tompkins's analysis in *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (1985) attempts to work through woman's dual representational location in both an external natural world and a universal natural-metaphysical one. According to Tompkins, women's isolation in the domestic realm and their domination in the religious sphere counterbalances their exclusion from political life. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) has therefore traditionally been lauded as "the *summa theologial* of nineteenth-century America's religion of domesticity...the story of salvation through motherly love."<sup>38</sup> Tompkins suggests that women's religious authority, rather than putting them in opposition to the external political world, can in fact be pushed to the point where it enters back into the political. As a narrative essentially about power, about how the "powerless die to save the powerful and the corrupt, and thereby show themselves more powerful than those they save," Tompkins asserts that domestic fiction is "as much political as [it is] religious."<sup>39</sup> In fully embracing woman's role as the paragon of religious virtue, Tompkins asserts that women writers, and Stowe specifically, developed what she calls a cultural theory of power whereby women overturned the dualism between the religious and the political: "the 'common sense' view of what is efficacious and what is not...is simply reversed, as the very possibility of social action is made dependent on the action taking place in individual hearts."<sup>40</sup> Little Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is therefore the most politically efficacious, bringing about the most practical change because she sacrifices her own life for the lives of others; "Little Eva's death enacts the drama of which all the major episodes of the novel are transformations, the idea, central to Christian soteriology, that the highest human calling is to give one's life for another."<sup>41</sup>

The dialectical unity that is achieved out of the opposition between religious natures and political constructs relies on the narrative tropes available in the literary mode of sentimentalism, where the material environment provides evidence of the characters' inner virtue; thus women's participation within a Christian soteriology provides access to a natural order that is both material and ideal. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* through sentimental representation manifests the Christian chronotope, or time-space, where nature provides the material point of entry into the sacred time-space of heaven. Tompkins's analysis of the scene with Eva and Tom on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain is a case in point; here she notes what she calls a correspondence between Eva's and Tom's perceptions of the awesome natural landscape as an allegorical representation of the Promised Land that is a sign of their inner grace, citing the following dialogue: "'Where do you suppose new Jerusalem is, Uncle Tom?' said Eva. 'O, up in the clouds, Miss Eva.' 'Then I think I see it,' said Eva. 'Look in those clouds!—they look like great gates of pearl, and you can see beyond them—far, far off—it's all gold.'"<sup>42</sup> Tom then sings a Methodist hymn describing a similar scene, then Eva in turn confirms the correspondence between physical nature and metaphysical nature with her own description. For Tompkins, the correspondence between Eva's and Tom's vision situates them both within the universal type of the Christ-figure. Yet what I find fascinating in this scene is the similarity between Eva's gendered and Tom's raced

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<sup>38</sup> Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), 215.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-127.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

perspective that contains the unique capacity to apprehend the duality within nature as material or external and metaphysical or universal not as contradiction but as a sentimental correspondence.

While Tompkins asserts that Eva and Tom both represent a Christ-type, this reduction effaces the specificity within the gendered and raced access to universal nature that Eva and Tom embody—Eva is the quintessential image of virtuous white womanhood, Tom is the down-to-earth folk symbol epitomized by his willingness to perform a spiritual song. Containing unique forms of human nature preserved in these cultural stereotypes, Eva's gender and Tom's race enable a similar capacity to shuttle seamlessly between external and universal natural realms. While others have noted access to nature as a resistant space that contests dominant political power, my argument emphasizes how the point of view of a dual conception of nature is essential to this empowerment, for both Eva and Tom must be able to take value from the ideal of universal nature and use it to empower themselves in the material world. Their unique point of view, enabled through their identification with racial and gender stereotypes, functions as what I noted in the introduction as a "visual shorthand" for how to understand abstract space and the imagined intersection between abstract and material realms of "nature."

Lora Romero builds on Nancy Armstrong's assertion that female subjectivity is produced rather than merely displayed through popular stereotypes of women's roles in domestic discourse; based on Foucault's concept of biopower, Romero examines antebellum feminist and abolitionist critique that is "*defined* rather than *contained* by its entanglement in power relations."<sup>43</sup> Romero's analysis points to the potentially subversive nature of women's sentimental fiction and women's texts on domestic science due to their attempts to work with and through the stereotype of women's identification with a dual nature. In "Bio-Political Resistance in Domestic Ideology and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (1989), Romero asserts that Stowe along with her sister Harriet Beecher, with whom she wrote a central text on women's domestic science, in their individual works develop a medicalist or hygienist bodily economy. Romero identifies in Beecher and Stowe the potential to domestically assimilate and invert a scientific discourse of nature-domination as exemplified in the medicalization of women's bodies through hygiene and the treatment of hysteria. In other words, Romero suggests that for Beecher and Stowe, the domestic sphere is not at all separate from the logics of rational management that dominated the economic sphere—thus the domestic sphere is ambiguously located both inside and outside of liberal capitalist relations. Domestic fiction and women's reform focuses on women's spatial segregation that yet suggests how the home was just as saturated with the dominant socio-political privileging of productivity as the market place.

Furthermore, Romero notes that the intensification of management tools for women's space within the home directly parallels the intensification of labor exploitation on the slave plantation: as a form of bodily economy or biopower, women's work and slave labor are by Romero seen to be related; describing themes in Stowe's work, Romero states, "[t]he very same hygienist logic behind Stowe's understanding of her hysteria governs her analysis of slavery, a coincidence suggested by the parallels her novel articulates between 'nervous' white women and overworked black slaves."<sup>44</sup> When women writers reveal how biopolitical management functions in all spaces, its rationalizing logics become visibly appropriated by women's domestic science

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<sup>43</sup> Lora Romero, "Bio-Political Resistance in Domestic Ideology and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," in *American Literary History* (winter 1989), 717.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 722.

discourse, which is a form of identification with power that resists the medicalization of women's bodies as objects of management. I will later explore Washington's alternative strategy; he pushes the relationship between race and rationalism to the extreme in order to situate the African American population as a necessary tool for the management of the opposing logics of liberalism and democracy. Here it is important to understand women's reform strategy of exploiting women's identification with a dual nature as deeply informing Washington's approach; the women's reform movement participated in a form of strategic essentialism that assumed the charge of women's identification with the realm of nature as a separate spatial dimension in order to extend their power over an ailing modern state. In *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (1995), Suellen Hoy argues that the "municipal housekeeping" movement provided a way for women to assert the authority that they gained within the home outside of the home to insist on the local implementation of welfare reform.<sup>45</sup>

Frances Willard, leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union relayed the concept of home protection to women's right to vote (*CD*, 73). In the 1880s, Willard "turned home protection into a slogan and used it to encourage women to get involved in activities *outside* of the home to protect the home" (*CD*, 73). As a result the Ladies' Health Protective Association was founded in 1884, and was the first women's organization formed specifically for municipal housekeeping (*CD*, 74). Most famously, Jane Addams opened Hull House in 1889, which was involved in enforcing city garbage removal, purification of drinking water, and pasteurization of urban milk (*CD*, 108). Women's reform rhetoric adopts the key terms of the biopolitical state—security, safety, and health—as the "natural" domain of women's work in order to subvert spatial segregation and minoritization. Yet discriminatory policies existed even in the reform movement that resulted in the creation of separate black settlement houses that were ill-equipped and lacked funding (*CD*, 118). African Americans were also excluded from sanitoriums that treated tuberculosis, and from 1914 to 1926, the African American death rate in Chicago from tuberculosis was six times higher than it was for whites (*CD*, 119). Washington's notorious concern for "personal hygiene" in this context of exclusion from the public health movement becomes much more visibly political. While *Up From Slavery* is known for its emphasis on what Hoy calls the culture of personal cleanliness, I will show in the following analysis of his "Atlanta Address," how Washington is indeed interested in civic or municipal housekeeping in his creation of and advocacy for African American educational institutions that delineate a privatized space of natural racial difference as well as a space that is internal to the progressive state.

Like the issue of "home protection" that allows women to take up the role of managing biopolitical power precisely where it is absent (in the absence of city garbage removal and clean drinking water for example), Washington pinpoints the management of African American life as the central realm where biopolitical power falls short. Describing how power intersects with the bodies and populations of African Americans in the Black Belt, both the opening and the ending of Washington's infamous "Atlanta Address," as it is cited in *Up From Slavery*, are centrally concerned with the state's main purpose of managing populations in order to promote life. Washington opens his address with the following words: "One third of the population of the South is of the Negro race. No enterprise seeking the material, civil, or moral welfare of this

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<sup>45</sup> Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995). Further references to *Chasing Dirt* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *CD*.

section can disregard this element of our population and reach the highest success” (*UFS*, 99). Explicitly addressing the issue of population management as the cornerstone of liberal democracy, Washington insists that, as a newly liberated population, African Americans must be included within the state’s ideological imperative to discipline and protect rather than repress and expel. He seems unusually prescient in his understanding that the progressive state will not necessarily “uplift” liberated African Americans unless it can also *use* them to ensure the “highest success” of the larger white population in a “new era of industrial progress” (*UFS*, 99). While biopower’s overt function is positive, constitutive, and enabling, Washington here draws on the underside of biopolitical security—that some populations must be excluded in order to protect the security of the larger population, that populations are reduced to objects of rational management for the sake of its protection.

What is significant is that Washington assumes the charge of this paradox, remaining open to the state’s use of racial others as an objectified resource, demanding that the African American population is an essential *vehicle* for the biopolitical optimization of life. At the same time, Washington demands the inclusion of African Americans as subjects of the Progressive state in his closing argument; he returns to the question of biopower and threatens that, without the inclusion of African Americans also as a human population that would benefit from Progressive conservation, the larger population would face imminent death:

Nearly sixteen millions of hands will aid you in pulling the load upward, or they will pull against you.... We shall constitute one-third or more of the ignorance and crime of the South, or one-third of its intelligence and progress; we shall contribute one-third to the business and industrial prosperity of the South, or we shall prove a veritable body of death, stagnating, depressing, retarding every effort to advance the body politic” (*UFS*, 101).

The biopolitical optimization of life in the South cannot succeed without the preservation of African American life, Washington insists, because statistically they represent “one-third” of the productive energy that contributes to “the business and industrial prosperity of the South.” If their labor remains alienated, which Washington represents with the metonym “sixteen millions of hands,” then the African American population itself will “prove a veritable body of death, stagnating, depressing, and retarding every effort to advance the body politic,” a blatant threat to the biopolitical enforcement of life. In this way, Washington’s Atlanta Address redefines the socio-economic relations of the New South; the African American population is figured as a prophylactic and medicalized “hand” that holds the key to the economic and political health of the larger population.

What minoritized populations of women and African Americans manage, I have tried to show, is a contradiction in the Progressive conception of nature and the natural environment: the state’s conservation measures address the environment and human bodies as a usable commodity, while the state’s preservation measures treat the environment and a gendered civil society as an inviolable natural essence. How else could such rampant exploitation of the New South’s natural environment find its *inception* in Roosevelt’s conservationist era?<sup>46</sup> It is important to keep in mind that conservationism was at heart an issue of development. As Gifford

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<sup>46</sup> Stradling notes Roosevelt’s significant role in the conservation movement. In 1902, Roosevelt created the nation’s first wildlife refuge at Pelican Island. The 1906 Antiquities Act gave Roosevelt the power to create national monuments on federal land; Roosevelt named the Grand Canyon a national monument in 1908 (Stradling, *Conservation*, 8).

Pinchot, who became Chief of the Division of Forestry in 1898, and Chief of the new Bureau of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture in 1900, writes in *Principles of Conservation* (1910), “The first general fact about conservation is that it stands for development. There has been a fundamental misconception that conservation means nothing but the husbanding of resources for future generations. There could be no more serious mistake. Conservation... means also and first of all the recognition of the right of the present generation to the fullest necessary use of all the resources with which this country is so abundantly blessed.”<sup>47</sup> For Pinchot, conservation meant rational development, and such development would best be achieved through federal administration.<sup>48</sup> The limitation to Pinchot’s model is its use of nature as if it were potentially unlimited: “The natural resources must be developed and preserved for the benefit of many.”<sup>49</sup> Conflating “development” with its opposite, “preservation,” Pinchot imagines that the scientific management of resources could lead to their infinite use. Thus, man’s mastery and domination of nature is ultimately imagined to result in the infinite protection of it.

Federal preservation of the west’s primitive wilderness therefore went hand in hand with its reclamation projects that radically altered the natural environment. Historian David Stradling writes that the 1902 Newlands Reclamation Act “allowed the federal government to begin planning and building dams and canals to expand agriculture in the arid West” and “laid the legal groundwork for the transformation of the West through the conservation of water in arid environments.”<sup>50</sup> The federal government’s conservation program in effect artificially produced nature, produced agricultural lands literally out of deserts. The creation of agricultural land is therefore an essential facet of the expansion of state power on the Foucauldian biopolitical model of environmental management.

Repeatedly referring to the wellbeing of the community and the people of the state, *Up From Slavery* ingeniously touches on the Progressive state’s cause, its amelioration of life through management of the environment as the basis for the rational-scientific organization of populations and resources. Yet in describing the African American population not only as beneficiaries of a welfare state but also as part of its very structure, Washington situates African Americans within the very contradictory conditions of biopower—the conflation between conservation and preservation, and the reduction of human life to what Ralph Ellison calls “a resource to be used” in order to protect and secure life. In *Up From Slavery*, the fictional figure of the black yeoman farmer embodies the contradictions of Progressive conservationism’s dual ideology of nature. Washington makes the most of this conflation between external nature and universal nature in his analysis of the role of black folk in the Progressive state when rhetorically calling into being a black yeomanry in his 1895 Atlanta Address. Given in the wake of the 1893 Panic that led into the Chicago Pullman Strike, the first national strike in U.S. history one year prior to his address, Washington’s speech claims that African American folk provide a much needed social service because they have the ability to both commodify land while at the same time preserving its universal value. Unlike the growing population of alienated white labor,

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<sup>47</sup> Gifford Pinchot, excerpt from *Principles of Conservation, Conservation in the Progressive Era: Classic Texts*, in *Conservation in the Progressive Era: Classic Texts*, ed. David Stradling (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2004), 20.

<sup>48</sup> Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 30-46.

<sup>49</sup> Pinchot, *Principles of Conservation*, 21.

<sup>50</sup> Stradling, *Conservation*, 5

Washington promises that the black population has the potential to progress from an unruly excluded mob, “the masses of us [who] are to live by the production of our hands,” into an educated class of small property owners; “to education of head, hand, and heart,” Washington addresses his white audience, “you will find that they will buy your surplus lands, make blossom the waste places in your fields, and run your factories” (*UFS*, 100). The black farmer is the miracle worker of land conservation, able to turn barren land into virgin soil. Yet in addition to the image of masculine mastery and use of nature by “people who have...tilled your fields, cleared your forests...and brought forth treasures from the earth,” black agrarianism also participates in the reinvigoration of a universal nature, the feminized and eternal blossoming of the earth (*UFS*, 101). Washington holds that this magical capability to master nature while being in tune with it is only possible in the folk relation that preserves the human subject, unifying head, hand, and heart in agrarian labor; the stereotype of the black yeoman thereby presents a visual shorthand that illustrates how to socially navigate the global tensions between the liberal capitalist use of nature and the democratic-nationalist preservation of nature. While Washington’s formulation seems simple enough, the black yeoman actually maps an entirely new and non-existent relationship to the land; Karen Ferguson describes how the black yeoman farmer threatened the white power structure in the South, insisting that it was quite subversive for Washington “to create an independent yeomanry through land ownership and self-sufficiency in a region where white prosperity depended on cotton monoculture and the subjugation of black labor.”<sup>51</sup>

Washington’s version of the African American yeoman illegitimately occupies a dominant national symbol; Woodward argues that even the white yeoman was a fiction, and perhaps the greatest illusion of the New South that facilitated its nostalgic claim to the farmer’s humanizing relation to nature geographically and temporally remote from the corrupting influence of monopoly capitalism—this image is also represented in the popular postbellum southern pastoral. The image of the New South as a group of small independent farmers was a fantasy of southern regional exceptionalism which the Raleigh *Observer* asserted in August 1877, contrasted a “[p]eaceful” and “self-contained” South against “the convulsed and panic-stricken, mob-ridden States of the north” (*ONS*, 113). The rise of the New South’s regional exceptionalism was also a response to the 1877 Panic that culminated in violent strikes and riots. This fiction of yeoman farmers in the South created a geographical escape valve for increasing class tensions; disgruntled workers were encouraged to “Go South, Young Man” in such publications as William H. Harrison, Jr.’s *How to Get Rich in the South* (1888) and Eugene C. Robertson’s *Road to Wealth Leads Through the South* (1894). Attracting capital from the North and abroad, the yeoman image only facilitated the deeper exploitation of the South for its vast forests and natural reserves of iron and coal. Washington’s creation of a racialized version of the yeoman farmer allows African Americans to participate in this collective fantasy of the New South from which they are practically excluded. The figure of the black yeoman in *Up From Slavery* thereby presents a geographically and environmentally layered cognitive map of racial

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<sup>51</sup> From Karen Ferguson, “Caught in ‘No Man’s Land’: The Negro Cooperative Demonstration Service and the Ideology of Booker T. Washington 1900-1918.” *Agricultural History* (winter 1998). Cited in Mark Hersey, “Hints and Suggestions to Farmers: George Washington Carver and Rural Conservation in the South.” *Environmental History* 11 (April 2006). Further reference to “Hints and Suggestions” will be cited parenthetically in the text as “Hints.”

integration into the material environment and into the discourse of Progressive environmental management.

I will now address how Washington's accommodationist attitude of slow integration strategically uses the environment to map a new form of relation to both the state and the region of the Black Belt. Kimberly K. Smith's *African American Environmental Thought: Foundations* (2007) fills a significant theoretical gap in its exploration of African American culture in the context of environmental history. Smith notes a significant duality in the dominant perceptions of land use, between the capitalist commodification of land and the cultural romanticization of land as a source of extra-political vitality. Smith locates three dominant notions of land possession that informed African Americans' relation to the environment. First, "land may be simply a commodity, something to be owned or traded."<sup>52</sup> Second, for African Americans, land possession is also inherently related to nationalism, to citizenship rights and "membership in the political community" (*AET*, 9). Lastly, and related to the political function of land, and what I have been defining as universal nature is what Smith calls the Romantic notion of land as "a source of creative energy, the particular manifestation of a universal life force. Possessing the land means coming into contact with the creative energy animating nature, and letting that vital force guide cultural production." (*AET*, 9) This last definition is conceptually linked to ideas of "the folk, race, and nation." In so far as African Americans can thrive on the American land, they claim a cultural right to the nation.

Smith importantly notes a difference in the way that "black progressives...rejected the romantic concept of nature, along with racial essentialism" and perceived the land instead "as common ground, the thing a social group holds in common" (*AET*, 9). Bypassing individual ownership, the black community form solves the contradiction between individual capitalist land-use and the cultural privileging of non-use or preservation for Romantic rejuvenation. "[T]he slave system forced slaves into an intimacy with the natural environment but also tended to alienate them from it," Smith argues (*AET*, 10). Slavery and peonage "corrupt agriculture" to the extent that "black agrarians" figured themselves as "the true American peasantry—America's folk—and a key source of cultural vitality" (*AET*, 10). There is a subtle but significant shift from Smith's rejection of the Romantic ideal of the land as a source of creative energy and life force, to her valorization of black agrarianism as the "key source of cultural vitality." Like Tompkins' assertion regarding the political power inherent in cultural dominance, in its ethnic agrarian form, nature is doubly inscribed as both commodified land and communal ground; the cultural valorization of ethnic agrarianism takes the place of and replaces the need for a romanticized landscape to contain creative energy because the Romantic universal conception of nature still exists within Smith's idealization of the African American folk *relation* as it is conceived of containing a life force immune to capitalist degradation.

Beyond his virtual mapping of the utility of black yeomen in the New South, Washington sought to materially reproduce and essentially create a new kind of relationship between black folk, the land, and the state that yet functions within the logics of Progressive biopolitical management. In 1896, one year after his Atlanta Address, Washington brought George Washington Carver to the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, which Washington founded, to head the new agriculture school. One of the "waste places" in the New South that Washington

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<sup>52</sup> Kimberly K. Smith, *African American Environmental Thought* (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 2007), 9. Further reference to *African American Environmental Thought* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *AET*.

referred to in his speech was Tuskegee; settled by whites in 1837 after the indigenous Creek population had been forcibly removed, while the yeoman farmers predominated until the end of the 1840s, Mark Hersey writes that with the rise of slave plantations, soil erosion became a significant problem (“Hints,” 242-246). So much so that, upon his arrival, Carver took note of Tuskegee’s “barren and furrowed hillsides and wasted valleys.”<sup>53</sup>

A scientist and expert in soil conservation, Carver published bulletins through Tuskegee’s experiment station that, while they resembled bulletins published by state funded land grant colleges, Hersey notes were distinctive: “[V]irtually all of his bulletins were written with ‘but few technical terms,’ and were directed to ‘the average farmer’ . . . Carver did not write them with the primary aim of increasing production,” which Hersey argues was a national obsession for increasing the nation’s urban-industrial economy” (“Hints,” 250). The federal conservation movement was lead by experts who were interested in economic expansion; Samuel P. Hays writes that “Conservation, above all, was a scientific movement” primarily concerned with the problem of Western economic growth—federal conservation began with the United States Geological Survey’s initiation of hydrographic study, since development in the arid West could not occur without Western water development.<sup>54</sup>

Unlike the federal program’s concern for resource management through economic development and efficiency, the conservation practiced at Tuskegee was guided by Carver’s ecological vision of a relationship between African Americans and the environment. Carver claims that his motive for coming to Tuskegee was “for the benefit of my people, no other motive in view,” and he preaches the same kind of ethical relation to nature, encouraging farmers to “be kind to the soil” (“Hints,” 244,240). Carver’s ecological approach to nature is deeply informed by his religious faith. “For Carver,” Hersey writes, “what was a weed to one man was a delicious vegetable to someone who appreciated the Creator’s munificence. . . . Simply by recognizing and taking advantage of God’s beneficence in the natural world (along with the process by which He made it operate), black farmers could forgo costly fertilizers, spare themselves the expense of store-bought food, and ultimately free themselves from an endless cycle of dependence and debt” (“Hints,” 245).

Excluded from federal efforts to coordinate research and outreach in agricultural science, Carver’s promotion of organic fertilizer is not only, as we might say today, more eco-friendly, it also reflects alternative local strategies that both subvert and attempt to replicate the social effects of the federal endorsement of commercial fertilizers through funded experiment stations. Carver espouses the local organic production of fertilizer in one bulletin published by the Tuskegee Experiment Station titled, “How to Build Up and Maintain the Virgin Fertility of Our Soil.” The title’s use of the possessive “our soil,” signals Carver’s activation of what Kimberley K. Smith calls the folk relation to land as communal ground. This bulletin contains a section titled, “Make Your Own Fertilizer on the Farm, Buy as Little as Possible.”<sup>55</sup> Here Carver advocates the local production of more “Natural” rather than “artificial” plant food, “those we

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<sup>53</sup> From Carver’s, “The Need of Scientific Agriculture in the South,” *Farmer’s Leaflet From the Bureau of Nature Study for Schools and Hints and Suggestions for Farmers No. 7* (April 1902). Cited in “Hints,” 244.

<sup>54</sup> Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel*, 2-7.

<sup>55</sup> George Washington Carver, “How to Build Up and Maintain the Virgin Fertility of Our Soil,” Bulletin No. 42 October 1936. Tuskegee Institute. An earlier version of the bulletin with the title “How to Build Up Worn Out Soils” was published in April 1905.



should be able to make on our farms, such as stable manure, refuse vegetable matter (composted), green corps plowed under, leaves from the forest, and muck from the swamp.”<sup>56</sup> Carver insists that “A year-round compost pile is absolutely essential and can be had with little labor and practically no cash outlay,” and he provides clear instructions on how to build your own “compost heap.”<sup>57</sup> As early as his *Farmer’s Almanac*, the first bulletin published by the experiment station in 1899, Carver instructs farmers to compost: “Rake up leaves, grass, straw muck, etc., and put into the compost heap; lime, ashes, plaster, oyster shells, and bones beaten are all valuable to this heap and under no circumstances should they be allowed to go to waste.”<sup>58</sup>

What these instruction manuals insist is that Nature remains universally available to poor black farmers. Carver claims, “fully ninety per cent or more of our farm crops come from the air either directly or indirectly and not from the soil”; just as air is a limitless resource, African American farms have a limitless capacity to grow abundant crops.<sup>59</sup> He folds the national cultural ideal of universally available nature back into the capitalist conception of externalizable nature with the implied assumption that through the black folk relation, nature can at the same time can be used for economic gain. In a radical call for farmers to expand their access to resources and land held in common, to swamp muck and wild plants in the Black Belt of the New South, Tuskegee fostered a grassroots environmentalist movement not to create the most efficient corporation, but to enforce public access to the commons in order to gain access to economic and social empowerment—this is a radical remapping and reappropriation of the environment.

Beyond being simply another form of New-South romanticism, Carver’s organic fertilizer serves the pragmatic purpose of allowing poor farmers to resist both federal and corporate evasions of the Sherman Antitrust Act in the South.<sup>60</sup> While 95 percent of the nation’s sulphur was in the South, in Louisiana and Texas, it was Standard Oil that developed a pipeline extraction process that allowed the Union Sulphur Company to begin producing 80 per cent of the world’s supply of sulphur. While it became cheaper to produce, Woodward argues that it was sold dear. Costing approximately \$3.75 to \$4.50 per ton, “it was sold by the monopoly at a fixed price of \$18.00” (*ONS*, 304-305). Woodward continues, “It took a big pipeline to siphon off the profits of the South’s sulphur. In 1913 the Union Sulphur Company produced 491,000 tons and sold it at a profit of \$13.85 per ton, a total profit of \$6,800,350. . . . A good part of these profits came out of the huge fertilizer bill of the Southern farmer” (*ONS*, 304-305). While cheap sulphur could have aided poor farmers in the Black Belt, Woodward claims that farmers in the Southeast spent 10 per cent of their gross income on fertilizers; the corporate exploitation of Southern minerals helped to form the conception of the South as a colony outside the realm of nation-state expansion via environmental conservation. Exploring environmental conservation as a means for social welfare in the South, Carver’s grassroots methods were intended to help poor local

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> George Washington Carver, “The Farmer’s Almanac,” Bulletin No. 1 January 1899, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Carver, “How to Build Up and Maintain,” 6.

<sup>60</sup> The United States Steel corporation’s purchase of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company that gave John Pierpont Morgan, according to Woodward, a “practical monopoly of the iron and steel trade of the South” (*ONS*, 300-301).

farmers free themselves from reliance on costly industrial fertilizers that federal programs made more accessible to white farmers and white-run experiment stations.

Since funding was provided by the state, Tuskegee suffered from the state's privileging of white land-grant or agricultural colleges, receiving only one-tenth of the funding that was allocated to the white-run experiment station at Auburn at its inception in 1897 ("Hints," 250). Hersey writes that after 1905, "the only fertilizer the Tuskegee station used was composted swamp muck manure and other organic waste. This meager financial support for the station, however, proved in the end to be a blessing of sorts, since it compelled Carver to conduct experiments with the kinds of materials available to impoverished black farmers" ("Hints," 250). Carver's unique form of guerrilla gardening significantly attempts to refigure the privileged geopolitical relation enforced through Progressive conservation practices—the virtual enslavement of black sharecroppers in the rural South. The stereotype of black folk identification with nature is used by Carver for social and economic advantage in such a way that contradicts the increasing role of the abstract state in enforcing a production and profit model that virtually ignored the environment and the populations in the New South. In this way Washington played a significant role in the attempt to recontain the productive energies of African Americans in the Black Belt that had fallen out of the dominant Progressive population and environmental management policies that could only see the South and its population through its abstract aim of material resource extraction.

Jason Scott Smith argues in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (1998) that local knowledge and practice, what he calls *mētis*, is essential to combating the twentieth-century state's tendency to oversimplify both agricultural and social systems. As an example, Smith relates the simplified city grid to the modern development of monocropped fields and the single-species forests that have historically been more vulnerable to certain pathogens.<sup>61</sup> In the New South, the invasion of the boll weevil caused the most havoc for its monocrop cotton culture. Had African American farmers been able to heed the advice in Carver's *Farmer's Almanac*, which encouraged crop diversification, such an invasion would not have been considered a threat (*SLS*, 311-312). Yet due to the tenacity of the crop-lien system, black sharecroppers were discouraged from growing alternative crops; ultimately, the federal government's final arrival into the New South to combat the boll weevil marked the beginning of the end for African American farming in the South by its unanimous support of large corporate interests. Carver's farming practices bring into relief how environmentalism might function as a geopolitical critique of a racial state that perpetuated the social, economic, and geographical segregation of its racial minorities even through its explicitly progressive policies.

### **Sentimentalism, Organicism, and Cunning Resistance**

Beyond putting into practice ecological principles through the Tuskegee Institute, which I will return to in the following section, Washington uniquely develops an aesthetic form that explores environmental consciousness as a mode of racial uplift; I will pick up on Jason Scott Smith's definition of *mētis*, introduced in the previous section, in order to work through Washington's aesthetic adoption of devices popularized in women's sentimental fiction to suggest how sentimentalism is used as an aesthetic form by Washington his critique of the

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<sup>61</sup> I examine the environmental significance of the simplified city grid of the modern city in my analysis of John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957) in Chapter Three.

progressive biopolitical state. I will analyze how sentimentalism allows a particular strategy of cognitive mapping of space from the African American point of view. Smith describes *mētis* as a subversive practice that he defines as “cunning intelligence,” a theme that I will explore as a popular trope in women’s sentimental fiction:

The concept comes to us from the ancient Greeks. Odysseus was frequently praised for having *mētis* in abundance and for using it to outwit his enemies and make his way home. *Mētis* is typically translated into English as ‘cunning’ or ‘cunning intelligence.’ While not wrong, this translation fails to do justice to the range of knowledge and skills represented by *mētis*. Broadly understood, *mētis* represents a wide array of practical skills and acquired intelligence in responding to a constantly changing natural and human environment (*SLS*, 313).

Ultimately for Smith, *mētis* represents the power in the multitude to resist the power of an abstract modern state, namely through their direct access to resources immediately available in “a constantly changing natural and human environment.” While *mētis* is described as a quintessentially masculine practice, Odysseus serving as its mythic poster child, Smith’s own examples of *mētis* include commanding feminist figures: Jane Jacobs and Rosa Luxemburg. Of Jacobs, he writes, “I think that a ‘woman’s eye,’ for lack of a better term, was essential to Jacobs’s frame of reference. . . . [I]t is difficult to imagine her argument being made in quite the same way by a man” (*SLS*, 138). More specifically, Smith goes on to explain that Jacobs’s “woman’s eye” allows her to subvert the technologized gaze of modern state planning: “The eyes with which she sees the street are, by turns, those of shoppers running errands, mothers pushing baby carriages, children playing, friends having coffee or a bite to eat, lovers strolling. . . . For Jacobs, the city as a social organism is a living structure that is constantly changing and springing surprises” (*SLS*, 138-139). In a similar manner Smith poses Rosa Luxemburg’s feminine/organic perspective of social revolution against Lenin’s masculinist totalitarianism. While Lenin favored Fordist and Taylorist mechanization and rationalist state planning, Smith asserts that Luxemburg’s “Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy” (1904) argued against the notion of the state as a “nightwatchman” opting for a more organic model of a state “fertilizing” the people (*SLS*, 169-171). Seeing revolution as “a complex natural process” in a constant state of flux, Luxemburg is an ideal emblem of Smith’s conception of *mētis* as a practical, local, organic response of people in relation to the state.

While I do not wish to draw unwarranted comparison between Luxemburg, a revolutionary Marxist, and Washington, well known for his accommodationism, I cite these examples in order to highlight Washington’s own form of feminine “cunning” in resistance to a growing abstract state that fails to fully acknowledge African American productive potential and life. As an aesthetic form, feminine cunning is most popularly explored in women’s sentimental fiction; Washington inserts himself into this mode by linking African Americans to an “orphan” race—in women’s domestic fiction, the orphan embodies women’s cunning intelligence; the orphan represents the power of human nature to develop without parental/governmental constraints. Intentionally taking an “apolitical” stance, focusing on child labor and relief to the poor as issues of morality and charity, these women brought about policy reforms by playing on dominant cultural conceptions of women’s natural moral superiority and maternal instinct.<sup>62</sup> Lora Romero writes in “Domesticity and Fiction” that “[t]he Domestic emphasis on cultivating principle in order to preserve the authenticity of the self may also account for the frequency with

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<sup>62</sup> Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*, 10-40.

which orphans appear in women's novels."<sup>63</sup> Sentimental fiction thematizes authenticity as the direct relationship between women's inner virtue and this virtue's reflection in visible external signs. In the instance of the orphan figure, the orphan becomes the visible "sign" of women's virtue; therefore, the independence of the orphan child becomes a symbol in Louis May Alcott's novel *Work* (1873) for women's newfound economic independence.<sup>64</sup> Jane Addams popularized the correspondence between domesticity and social welfare through the figure of the child as the privileged object of women's reform. Linda Gordon notes that the 1870s campaigns against child abuse and the growth of services for children was a direct result of women's activism; consequently, "the discourse about helpless, tender, 'innocent' children was often covertly an anti-male discourse, critiquing men's irresponsibility and brutality. In this discourse, children figured to some extent as victims of men."<sup>65</sup> Just as wife beating and child abuse become synonymous in women's reform rhetoric, *Up From Slavery* draws an implicit identification between white racial oppression and child abuse. The narrative's opening gambit is the theme of child labor exploitation in slavery.

Describing his vulnerability as a child slave, Washington paints a pathetic scene of a vulnerable boy on the harsh road of slavery, "The road was a lonely one, and...I was always frightened" (*UFS*, 9). Washington applies sentimental narrative techniques, literalizing the metaphoric "road" of slavery for example, that uses "authentic" experience to get to the heart of the virtue of black folk identity. Slavery's accoutrements, wooden shoes and a flax shirt, are depicted as instruments of torture. Washington writes, "The most trying ordeal that I was forced to endure as a slave boy, however, was the wearing of a flax shirt....I can scarcely imagine any torture...that is equal to that caused by putting on a new flax shirt for the first time....Even to this day I can recall accurately the tortures that I underwent when putting on one of these garments. The fact that my flesh was soft and tender added to the pain" (*UFS*, 11). It is the human pain, the pain of "flesh" and of the "tender" body of a child, tropes familiar to child labor reform, that Washington uses to grab his readers in the opening pages of his narrative.

The second chapter, titled "Boyhood Days," focuses primarily on the exploitation of child labor as the dominant problem of human conservation in the South. Washington examines the plight of children in the salt mines of Malden, West Virginia, where he travels with his family. "Though I was a mere child," Washington writes, "my stepfather put me and my brother at work in one of the furnaces. Often I began work as early as four o'clock in the morning" (*UFS*, 18). When he begins working in the coal mine that provided fuel for the salt-furnace, Washington describes with careful detail the dangers of the mine where he would often get lost, and emphasizes the need to protect all children from these conditions:

The work was not only hard, but it was dangerous. There was always the danger of being blown to pieces by a premature explosion of power, or of being crushed by falling slate. Accidents from one or the other of these causes were frequently occurring, and this kept me in constant fear. Many children of the tenderest years

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<sup>63</sup> Lora Romero, "Domesticity and Fiction," in *The Columbia History of the American Novel*, ed. Emory Elliott et al. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1991), 123.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>65</sup> Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*, 34. Gordon writes that concern for single mothers created "the first modern public welfare in the United States. State and local governments established programs to aid single mothers, mainly in the decade 1910-1920" (Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*, 37).

were compelled then, as is now true I fear, in most coal-mining districts, to spend a large part of their lives in these coal-mines, with little opportunity to get an education; and, what is worse...young boys who begin life in a coal-mine are often physically and mentally dwarfed. They soon lose ambition to do anything else than to continue as a coal-miner” (*UFS*, 23).

Using the adjective “tender” to describe the vulnerability of both child slaves and child labor, Washington focalizes sentimental affect to reflect the virtue of children both black and white. Like Pinchot’s scientific argument for nature conservation, Washington asserts that child labor is an inefficient use of human resources in the South. It is implied that the physical and mental consequences of such labor causes alienation and lack of productivity in the adult workforce, “[t]hey soon lose ambition to do anything else.” Child labor reform was a significant part of the humanitarian reform of laissez-faire capitalism that unfortunately lagged in the New South (*ONS*, 419). With respect to child labor laws, in 1900, “three out of ten workers in the mills of the South were children under sixteen years of age, and 57.5 per cent of those children were between ten and thirteen.” (*ONS*, 416). In Alabama, reform took a backward step with the repeal of an 1887 law that limited the workday to eight hours. While by 1912, Woodward writes that “all southern states had adopted an age-and-hour limit and some sort of prohibition against night work for children,” the leading textile states employed children as young as 12 for a sixty hour work week (*ONS*, 419). The reason that Southern reformers failed to change conditions for child labor is because textile mills often accommodated the cause of social health, providing churches and public schools for its workers (*ONS*, 420). This form of mill-village paternalism provided social welfare services in a region that had been neglected by the federal government.

Offering African American folk as symbolic orphans of history, a child-race whose conservation is essential to protecting a human nature that is being infected or polluted by poverty, Washington frames his child-self as the quintessential object of reform—the orphan. He fabricates his own lineage, naming himself “Booker Washington,” for lacks of a “distinguished ancestry” that he “could trace back through a period of hundreds of years” (*UFS*, 21). Yet it is not Washington alone that is orphaned by slavery, having lost nearly all of his familial ties; “[M]y case will illustrate that of hundreds of thousands of black people in every part of our country,” Washington argues (*UFS*, 22). As an orphan race, African Americans occupy a genealogy outside of the dominant class structure, a genealogy romantically related to a sentimental proximity to an authentic natural world. Two paragraphs after claiming an orphan lineage, Washington introduces a literal “orphan boy,” adopted by his mother and named James B. Washington. A sentimental trope, the shift from figurative to material truth confirms Washington’s authorial virtue and reinforces his moral authority.

The dominance of the orphan in *Up From Slavery* becomes even more significant when contextualized within the child labor reform movement in the New South from which African Americans were excluded. Alabama’s growing cotton mills posed a threat to the wages of mill workers in the North, and according to Shelley Sallee, in 1898 Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor “called on Birmingham’s established trade union movement to promote upcoming legislation on the labor of women and children.”<sup>66</sup> In 1900, Gompers sacrificed radical politics in order to effect labor reform in Alabama that would ultimately benefit the mill workers in the North. Sending a “well-educated Englishwoman, Irene Ashby, to

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<sup>66</sup> Shelley Sallee, *The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in the New South* (Athens: The Univ. of Georgia Press, 2004), 50-51.

Alabama to make child labor into a humanitarian issue divorced from class politics,” Gompers lobbied for “middle-class, sentimental, racialized reform.”<sup>67</sup> What resulted was a strong middle-class Progressive movement backed by the Alabama Federation of Women’s Clubs, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and the Alabama Woman’s Press Club. Sallee asserts that while efforts were led by an all-male Alabama Child Labor Committee, women reformers worked in concert with male reformers to construct a powerful cultural and sentimental figure of “the forgotten child” to invigorate nostalgia for a prior age of white unity.<sup>68</sup>

The orphan as a literary trope is a complex figure that constructs African Americans as temporally prior to modern humanity, which preserves what the larger population has lost, since, as Washington argues, the race is still in its infancy. While “[t]he slave system...took the spirit of self-reliance and self-help out of the white people,” Washington argues that African Americans are like orphans, undefined by the hierarchies of birth or race, who are unlike poor whites particularly in their unique capacity to transcend poverty: “the Negro youth must work harder and must perform his tasks even better than a white youth in order to secure recognition. But out of the hard and unusual struggle through which he is compelled to pass, he gets a strength, a confidence, than one misses whose pathway is comparatively smooth by reason of birth or race” (*UFS*, 23). Liberal reformers attempt to save poor white children as the “forgotten child” of the white race utilizes the stereotype of poor white orphans to function as a visual shorthand for the effects of a globalizing liberal capitalism unchecked by democratic reform. Washington likewise frames African Americans as orphans of history that open access to a lost realm of human nature—“self-reliance and self-help”—necessary for humanity to navigate the alienating influence of the capitalist domination of space; in other words, Washington utilizes the figure and the transformative point of view of the African American orphan figure in order to enact a radical remapping of the geopolitical space of the South as well as a remapping of the relationship between African Americans and the nation-state.

Such a genealogical distinction allows Washington to elide African American stigmatization in association with an impoverished class of southern whites; Progressive labor reform in the New South responded to the growing degradation of poor whites even as efforts to improve public health continued to stigmatize poor whites by identifying southern diseases such as hookworm as a “germ of laziness.” Although he too is poor, lacking the money to pay his entire passage to the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, Washington never confronts his poverty because of his identification with black folk nature. On his initial journey to Hampton, Washington’s coach stops for the night at a hotel where Washington is denied a room because of his race; he flippantly adds, “It is true I had practically no money in my pocket with which to pay for bed or food” (*UFS*, 26). When Washington finally runs out of money in Richmond Virginia, he comes even closer to resembling a vagrant white man, describing how he had reached the city “tired, hungry, and dirty...late at night” (*UFS*, 26). Yet rather than sleeping on the streets like a tramp, Washington devises a solution that reinforces the exemplarity of his racial status. Having walked the streets until after midnight, he describes how he had reached the limit of exhaustion:

I came upon a portion of a street where the board sidewalk was considerably elevated. I waited for a few minutes, till I was sure that no passer-by could see me, and then crept under the sidewalk and lay for the night upon the ground, with

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

my satchel of clothing for a pillow. Nearly all night I could hear the tramp of feet over my head” (*UFS*, 27).

Instead of the vagrants who “tramp” overhead throughout the night, Washington has evaded their fate by claiming a racialized right to the earth. His “night upon the ground,” evokes the opening scenes of the narrative that recalls his boyhood in slavery where he slept in a rough house built upon “the naked earth.” In this instance, “cunning intelligence” is racialized as the black folk relation to the environment that competes with the biopolitical state’s own production of a second-order nature in the form of the material infrastructure of the sidewalks.

Desperation evaporates as Washington finds refuge in nature. Yet this refuge is achieved through the misuse of civic infrastructure, sleeping under the sidewalk rather than walking on it. Washington assimilates into the infrastructure of Richmond’s city street and discovers within it, the natural world. This scene is reiterated upon Washington’s arrival at Hampton, where he fears being mistaken for “a worthless loafer or a tramp” (*UFS*, 28). He quickly puts these suspicions to rest, proving that unlike a tramp, he knows how to combat “dirt,” and thus gains access to the “institution.” Washington’s famous “entrance exam” brings into relief how Hampton, as an African American institution, participates in essentializing poverty as a contagious illness somehow caused by pollution and “dirt.” There is a world of difference between Washington’s “earthen” home and the “dirt” that pervades the tramp, which is the difference between the racialized versus the class relation to nature; African American folk live in harmony with nature, can also dominate noxious forms of nature (dirt) because they are orphans of history existing outside of the dominant white class structure while poor whites are dominated by nature and infected by “the germ of laziness.”

Suellen Hoy argues that dirt was a key word that accompanied the creation of local municipal welfare institutions such as hospitals, a city’s sewerage, and school buildings, and generally contributed to the passage of public health policies. It is interesting that the externalization of poor whites through their association with dirt and germs gave impetus to the movement that provided higher standards of sanitation and health for the larger population. Washington likewise claims of the Tuskegee Institute, “the school will always be supported in proportion as the inside of the institution is kept clean and pure and wholesome” (*UFS*, 83, 86). Hoy states that,

A collection of efforts to improve personal cleanliness paralleled the public health and municipal housekeeping campaigns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Municipal housekeeping and health matters all involved civic-minded women and sanitarians as leaders; the drive for personal cleanliness expressed the moral leadership of private individuals like Booker T. Washington and settlement-house workers (chiefly female), who tried to inculcate middle-class standards of hygiene among the African American and immigrant community (*CD*, 87).

While Hoy takes note of Washington’s participation within this discourse as a proponent of “personal cleanliness,” I argue that Washington was also deeply “civic-minded,” invested in creating the infrastructure and policies of a welfare state at a time when African Americans as a population were being excluded from the benefits of child welfare and local municipal reform.

Sidonie Smith’s influential analysis of Washington’s literary aesthetic in relation to Benjamin Franklin’s Protestant ethic continues to influence an ongoing thread of comparison

between Washington and Western male discourses of domination.<sup>69</sup> Jeremy Wells's asserts in "Up from Savagery: Booker T. Washington and the Civilizing Mission," that Washington's concern for cleanliness participates in colonial civilizationism.<sup>70</sup> Raymond Hedin and Donald B. Gibson emphasize Washington's espousal of a masculine paternalist narrative.<sup>71</sup> I am arguing that the decidedly feminine or feminist cast of Washington's aesthetic participation in women's domestic and sentimental literature in *Up From Slavery* has for some reason been ignored. What is significant in women's domestic literature is not only the strategic occupation of local space through "cunning intelligence," but its recognition of populations and resources that have been overlooked by the state because they have fallen out of the dominant paradigm of abstract state management—the orphan and the widow. Women's confinement in the domestic sphere reinforces the home as a region outside of alienating capitalist relations; the women's reform movement and domestic fiction recognize that women possess a great deal of skills and abilities, what Foucault calls "human capital," not being harnessed for "productive" use. Washington suggests that the same is true for black folk and suggests how sentimental tropes might function to schematize the racialized relationship to the state as one defined through the productivity of black folk identification with nature, which allows Washington the illegitimate occupation of state infrastructure through his parallel claim to nature.

In the absence of federal management, a grassroots women's reform movement emerged throughout the nation, mostly in urban centers, that brought attention to women's health and its relationship to environmental toxicity, particularly with the issue of clean drinking water, garbage removal, and contaminated milk. Key texts from this discourse bring into relief the glaring absence of a welfare infrastructure to protect the health of women and children.

As cultural narratives, Washington's *Up from Slavery* and *Working with the Hands* resonate with texts such as Ellen H. Richards' *The Cost of Food: A Study in Dietaries* (1901) and Mary Ritter Beard's *Woman's Work in Municipalities* (1915), two texts that utilize women's moral power to act on behalf of the public interest to impact public health. Washington, Richards, and Beard together represent a sample of the Progressive eco-feminist response to federal conservation, which attempts to blur the distinction between nature and infrastructure, the public sphere and a marginalized and naturalized domestic space, and powerfully illustrates how domesticity might function for race-based critiques of biopolitics. Linda Gordon asserts that "'Welfare' today refers almost exclusively to a few programs of assistance to the very poor, particularly Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and 'general relief,' the last-resort program for the destitute and desperate."<sup>72</sup> As an alternative to this pejorative and implicitly racial definition, Gordon suggests a more capacious conception of welfare, arguing that

'Welfare' could as accurately refer to all of a government's contributions to its citizens' well-being. These include paved streets and sidewalks; highways; public

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<sup>69</sup> See Sidonie Smith, *Where I'm Bound: Patterns of Slavery and Freedom in Black American Autobiography* (Westport: Greenwood, 1974).

<sup>70</sup> Jeremy Wells, "Up from Savagery: Booker T. Washington and the Civilizing Mission," in *Southern Quarterly* 42 (fall 2003).

<sup>71</sup> See Donald B. Gibson's "Strategies and Revisions of Self-Representation in Booker T. Washington's Autobiographies," in *American Quarterly* 43 (September 1993). Also see Raymond Hedin's "Paternal at Last: Booker T. Washington and the Slave Narrative Tradition," in *Callaloo* 7 (October 1979).

<sup>72</sup> Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*, 1-2.



transportation systems; schools; parks; tree maintenance; policing; firefighting; public water, sewage treatment; garbage collection; food and drug regulation; pollution regulation; building inspection; and driver testing and licensing....But even if we label as welfare only those programs that provide cash to citizens, we could include home mortgage tax reductions, business expense deductions, medical expense deductions, farm subsidies, corporate subsidies, government college scholarships and loans, capital gains tax limits, Social Security old-age pensions, and Medicare."<sup>73</sup>

Many of these issues, food and drug regulation, sewage treatment, public water, and building inspection, were originally addressed in the Progressive women's reform movement. What progressive women and Washington most stridently bemoan is the absence of welfare's infrastructures and institutions. This absence is apparent in popular instruction manuals such as *The American Women's Home* (1869) by Catherine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, written for women in a pre-technological age when most households lacked running water and sewage (CD, 21-22). The numerous instruction bulletins published by the Tuskegee Institute, along with *Up From Slavery* and *Working with the Hands*, can be seen as similar guides or how-to manuals for African Americans in the South that lack access to welfare infrastructure and services; these guides instructed variously on organic farming techniques, personal hygiene, home sanitation, and crop diversification. Formally, these manuals point to the need for local tactical knowledge to supplement the expansion of an abstract modern corporate state and embody what Jason Scott Smith in his critique of the modern abstract state calls *mêts*, or the strategic use of local knowledge to subvert the technologized gaze of the state. Although I am arguing that local knowledge is necessary in the absence of a social welfare state.

What I am also suggesting here is another take on what Jason Scott Smith calls "seeing like a state"; while Smith emphasizes how local "cunning intelligence" contradicts the abstract management of the state, I argue that Washington's race-based community movements outline a path to power through a racialized identification with the state as a second-order nature, by providing the services and the infrastructure that the state should provide, but for whatever reason, it isn't providing.<sup>74</sup> As noted earlier, the progressive state's first phase of expansion focused on environmental management that did not focus explicitly on social welfare services; moreover, the emergence of social welfare infrastructure in large part excluded the African American population. Washington therefore exhorts black folk to become state-like—African Americans will themselves be uplifted to the extent that they can be used as a mechanism to promote the wellbeing of the larger population: he writes, "I think that the whole future of my race hinges on the question as to whether or not it can make itself of such indispensable value that the people in the town and the state where we reside will feel that our presence is necessary to the happiness and wellbeing of the community. No man who continues to add something to the material, intellectual, and moral well-being of the place in which he lives is long left without proper reward. This is the great human law which cannot be permanently nullified" (*UFS*, 128).

Alternately insisting upon the humanization and instrumentalization of the African American population, Washington's mapping of the black folk relation to the environment presents a model of organicism that sutures together the democratic and liberal capitalist

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>74</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1998), 6.

impulses of the state. This strategy evokes Hegel's analysis in his *Philosophy of Right* (1820), which asserts that the people and the state form an organic unity out of opposing tendencies in the liberal democratic state. Just as German romantic conceptions of the Volk evolved in response to French domination and privileging of citizenship rights, Washington's strategy of occupying and illegitimately reproducing the welfare state in the form of black institutions, also rejects citizenship as a path to inclusion and formulates a radical re-mapping of the biopolitical organization of the relationship between black folk and the land in the South. German folk identity is generally understood as a critique of French Enlightenment categories of rational citizenship and nationhood; in contrast to citizenship, the Volk represent an organic relationship between land, people, and state as an immediate, contingent, and constant negotiation, a dynamic that evokes what Jason Scott Smith's notion of *mētis*.

*Up From Slavery* begins by suggesting how black folk culture contains an organic solution to the corrupt influence of dominant institutions. Describing his father, Washington admits, "I do not find especial fault with him. He was simply another unfortunate victim of the institution which the Nation unhappily had engrafted upon it at that time" (*UFS*, 8). Slavery as an "institution" is described as a horticulturalist's nightmare "engrafted" upon and preventing the natural growth of the nation. In stark contrast to his father, allegedly a white slave-owner, Washington portrays his life as a slave as intimately aligned with a natural order. His description of the slave cabin where he lived is depicted in terms that emphasize a simple life that is authentic to the extent that it is close nature: "There was no wooden floor in our cabin, the naked earth being used as a floor" (*UFS*, 8). In contrast to the "naked" authenticity of Washington's sentimental attachment to the land, Reconstruction epitomizes the corruption inherent in state institutions built on "false foundations" that are "artificial and forced" (*UFS*, 42). A significant apparatus of the state, educational institutions, are responsible for reproducing the false foundation of Reconstruction by teaching students to be concerned with superficial "outward appearance" and implicitly by extension an empty form of citizenship (*UFS*, 43). What is lacking from these institutions is precisely race's folk access to nature as a more authentic and primary structuring social force.

Beginning with the story of his childhood in slavery, Washington describes his own home as it establishes a different kind of relationship with the land: "In the center of the earthen floor there was a large, deep opening covered with boards, which was used as a place in which to store sweet potatoes....An impression of this potato-hole is very distinctly engraved upon my memory" (*UFS*, 8). The force of nature is most powerful in its humblest articulation; this earthen hole literally marks Washington, leaving a material impression "engraved" upon his memory. Creating a one to one relationship between the material thing and the idea, between the earthen hole and the memory of it, the folk relation to nature is not so much an idealization of nature's grandeur as it is the romantic sentimental attachment to nature as a life-giving force. Displacing the domestic housekeeper who manages the aesthetic and moral order of nature circumscribed within her home, Washington transforms woman's intimacy with a naturalized domestic space into a racialized one.

The cognitive map that Washington draws through sentimental tropes defines an alternative realm of nature as a theoretical outside to corrupt power structures. African American assimilation into dominant "artificial" institutions is a threat to life itself; Washington asserts that, "[i]n a word, they [African American students] did not appear to me to be beginning at the bottom, on a real, solid foundation, to the extent that they were at Hampton" (*UFS*, 43). It is the unique class position of African Americans at the "bottom" of the social hierarchy that affords

them a privileged access to the “real” and “solid foundation” of nature. Subtly shifting into the literal manifestation of his concept of “beginning at the bottom,” Washington goes on to describe how, “I wished...that by some power of magic I might remove the great bulk of these people into the country districts and plant them upon the soil, upon the solid and never deceptive foundation of Mother Nature, where all nations and races that have ever succeeded got their start—a start that at first may be slow and toilsome, but one that nevertheless is real” (*UFS*, 44-45). The metaphor of beginning at the bottom effaces the artificial boundary between concept and material thing, the idea of the “bottom” is made manifest in the material proximity to physical nature, which in turn becomes a metaphoric Mother Nature that is the authentic “bottom” of all civilization.

Expanding this trope of romantic immediacy, Washington situates black folk knowledge against the knowledge production systems of the state. As a spontaneous and organic process outside of institutional production, Washington admits of slave folk knowledge, “I have never been able to understand how the slaves throughout the South, completely ignorant as were that masses so far as books or newspapers were concerned, were able to keep themselves so accurately and completely informed about the great National questions that were agitating the country” (*UFS*, 6-7). Slaves on the plantation, according to Washington, participated in an alternative form of knowledge production not dependant upon any infrastructure and represents an alternative oral production of knowledge, “termed the ‘grape-vine’ telegraph” (*UFS*, 10). Sustained by access to an invisible communication apparatus, African American knowledge production is imagined as an alternative and more democratic mode of disseminating vital knowledge.

Yet closer examination of Washington’s representation of African American knowledge production within the context of slavery reveals that in addition to this organic form of knowledge associated with the oral tradition, the slave’s knowledge originates with his ability to assimilate into the infrastructure of the state itself. Washington explains, “Often the slaves got knowledge of the results of great battles before the white people received it. This news was usually gotten from the coloured man who was sent to the post-office for the mail” (*UFS*, 11). Here the oral tradition is supplemented or supported by a very un-natural assimilation of the slave into the infrastructure of the postal service. In a sense leaching off of the postal service’s institutionalized form of knowledge dissemination, the slave’s invisibility within this context enables his covert use of oral transmission, most probably listening to the men who were reading the latest news at the post office, in order to gain better knowledge more quickly than the rest of the town.

What interests me in this scene is the ambiguous position of the slave who is neither clearly subjectified nor objectified through contact with the state’s “welfare” infrastructure as defined by Gordon. Just as the slave’s assimilation into the nation-state results in the legal designation of an incomplete or fraction of a “person,” what results here is an incomplete assimilation in relation to the infrastructure of the state, which in turn enables a unique mediatory position between the infrastructure of society and society itself. Excluded from using the postal service or being affiliated with it in any official manner, the slave is yet intimate with its function. Washington similarly inscribes African American educational institutions as a mediation of natural and social forces. He therefore insists that a separate African American education system could be maintained at no cost to the state:

One might have removed from Hampton all the buildings, class-rooms, teachers, and industries, and given the men and women there the opportunity of coming

into daily contact with General Armstrong, and that alone would be a liberal education. The older I grow, the more I am convinced that there is no education which one can get from books and costly apparatus that is equal to that which can be gotten from contact with great men and women (*UFS*, 30).

Organicism here supports the liberal doctrine of self-uplift without the state assistance as great men and women will thrive without the “costly apparatus” of the state. Instead, students emulate General Armstrong’s commanding personality, which thrives independent of state funds.

While Washington’s adoration of Hampton founder General Armstrong, who is described as “a perfect man” just prior to this passage, is well noted, this reference to the great men and women who manage to evade the institution comes shortly after Washington’s anecdote about his mother’s similar triumph over institutions after his complaint for a store bought hat. In the scene depicting his mother, the institution refers to corporate commodity production: “I put the case before my mother,” Washington explains, “she had no money with which to buy a ‘store hat,’ which was a rather new institution at that time among the members of my race” (*UFS*, 20). By instead making a “homespun” hat, his mother teaches Washington an important lesson, “that my mother had strength of character enough not to be led into the temptation of seeming to be that which she was not” (*UFS*, 21). As one of a number of heroic and reform-minded women, Washington’s unnamed mother represents the collective folk relation to nature that never fails to provide for immediate needs while at the same time affirming individual authenticity, keeping her from being “that which she was not.” The potential slippage between General Armstrong and Washington’s mother significantly sheds light on the manner in which the sentimental valorization of virtue in black folk culture equalizes social personalities as equally “productive” individuals.

At the same time, Washington suggests that as both an individual and a collective identification, black folk uniquely suture together the liberal individualist and democratic communitarian values of liberal democracy. In his *Philosophy of Right* (1829), Hegel uses the concept of the Volk to resolve this central opposition in liberal democracy—between popular communitarian democracy and individual liberal freedom. While the concept of the Volk as a key constituent of the organic state was popularized before Hegel and theorized culturally by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn in *German Folkdom* (1810) and politically by Adam Müller, Hegel is noted for his unique “attempt to *synthesize* communitarianism with liberalism in a single coherent conception of the modern state.”<sup>75</sup> While Hegel admired the communitarian model of the Greek *polis*, he believed that it failed as a model state because it could not satisfy “the right of subjectivity” or individual liberty based on reason.<sup>76</sup> Hegel’s theory significantly underscores the political potential within ecocriticism as a form of analysis that privileges examinations of how ideologies of nature interact with the modern state; nature figures prominently in his analysis of ethics and morality. While morality signifies the individual’s private conscience, ethical life “considers the individual as an integral part of the social and political whole.”<sup>77</sup> As a political model, one’s human nature and the natural unity of all life provide an organic solution

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<sup>75</sup> Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 225. For a discussion of German cultural and political romanticism in Jahn and Müller, see Peter Vierick, *Metapholitics: From Wagner and the German Romantics to Hitler* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 32-33, 69.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-231.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

to the dual aims of the modern liberal state: self-interest and the common good. While Washington's espousal of liberal individualism has been much noted and maligned, I assert that the other half of his ideology, which emphasizes community and the common good, and the organicism in folk identity that unites the individual with the collective, has been vastly underestimated.

For the remainder of this section, I will focus on Washington's exposition of organicism, its cultural currency in his aim of institutional protection for African American life as part of the common good. The counterfactual scenario of removing the "costly apparatus" from Hampton soon becomes a reality in the narrative when Washington is chosen to take charge of a segregated normal school in Alabama. He describes his initial arrival: "Before going to Tuskegee I had expected to find there a building and all the necessary apparatus ready for me to begin teaching. To my disappointment, I found nothing of the kind. I did find, though, that which no costly building and apparatus can supply,--hundreds of hungry, earnest souls who wanted to secure knowledge" (*UFS*, 52). Again bringing into the real what was initially a hypothetical concept, the narrative formally reinforces the Romantic organic growth that is thematically signaled by the "natural" presence of African American souls supplementing the absence of artificial state infrastructure. Yet this absence is also criticized by Washington, who contends that the state legislature provided an insufficient appropriation of \$2,000 that could only be used to pay the salaries of the instructors, leaving no provisions for "land, buildings, or apparatus" (*UFS*, 53). In his tour through Tuskegee's environs, Washington finds that the state has failed not only his own designated institute but the local population more broadly—"there was practically no apparatus in the schoolhouses," he cites, "except that occasionally there was a rough blackboard" (*UFS*, 55). In this instance, Washington appears to contradict himself, insisting on the need for adequate infrastructure and complaining of its absence. To solve this dilemma, he claims a commitment to "laying a foundation for the masses"—Washington goes about creating what is represented in the narrative as a grassroots movement that both successfully provides the much need infrastructure while at the same time insisting on the organic nature of black institutions versus the dominant white institutions of the state.

Miss Olivia A. Davidson, a woman educated in public schools in Ohio, a yellow fever nurse, and Washington's second wife, is enlisted by Washington to head this grassroots movement to provide the necessary apparatus for the school. Made largely responsible for the fund raising efforts in the narrative, Miss Davidson makes a "personal canvas" of both races in the town for a fundraiser where people donated chicken, bread, and pies to be sold at a festival to raise money in order to purchase land for the school. Washington also credits Miss Davidson for her ability to raise money where "most of those applied to gave small sums" (*UFS*, 62). Significantly underplaying the role of corporate donations, Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute's nascence is represented as the birth of an ideal organic state where institutions reflect the direct will of the masses. This form of direct representation popularized by women's involvement in municipal housekeeping is reinforced by the multiple representations of Miss Davidson's tireless work. Her prior occupation as a yellow fever nurse also inflects her efforts with the moral authority of the women's public health movement.

Women's tending of nature also participates in this discourse of women's unique ability to foster public health. Dianne D. Glave argues that gardening provided an important forum for African American women in the Progressive era; while the federal farm demonstration system sponsored by the Smith-Lever Act excluded African American educational institutions, African American women benefitted from its sponsorship of the Home Demonstration Service.

Following the same model as federal farming, Glave writes that with Home Demonstration, “Progressives envisioned national agricultural reforms that subjugated the discrete and nuanced expertise of local actors to models of bureaucratic efficiency and skill.”<sup>78</sup> Glave asserts that African Americans resisted this dominant state-sponsored model, instead developing “an expertise from community knowledge, from their own interpretation of agricultural reforms, and from the training they received in horticulture in the Cooperative Extension Service, African American schools, and other places.”<sup>79</sup> Taking bits and pieces from “scientific management” and local folk tradition, African American women developed a hybrid brand of environmentalism; specifically in two types of practice, “mimicking nature and cultivating the row system,” African American gardening both “conflicted with and paralleled Progressive agricultural techniques.”<sup>80</sup> In 1920, the Cooperative Extension Service reported that African American women completed 17,311 demonstrations on gardening and home beautification.<sup>81</sup> While I do not wish to go into great depth regarding the hidden history of African American women’s participation in Progressive environmentalism, I would like to suggest that Washington for better or worse anticipated this movement and attempted to insert himself into it for the very same reasons that Glave finds it so compelling—it enabled the creation of “distinctively African American spaces that simultaneously mimicked nature and rejected Euro-American control.”<sup>82</sup> Limning the distance between nature and scientific management, African American gardens resist power, as Romero argues of women’s domestic fiction, through a complex engagement with it.

In order to justify the separate institutional apparatus available to Tuskegee students, Washington turns to the female population and the importance of women’s education in both moral guardianship and the proper tending of nature. *Working with the Hands* outlines the educational program for Tuskegee women to include coursework in Dairying, Poultry Raising, Horticulture (orchards and small fruit), Floriculture and Landscape Gardening. Washington asserts that women in the South make up an untapped labor resource whose unique relation to nature befits women’s work “in the open air” rather than work in factories where women become “little more than a machine” (*WWH*, 116). He furthermore makes explicit reference to the woman’s suffrage movement; describing how women were marginalized at the first Negro Conference for local farmers, Washington reflects, “I felt that history was repeating itself. In the days of Lucretia Mott, and the early struggles of Susan B. Anthony, women had no rights that were worth mentioning, and, notwithstanding the fact that there were many women present at this first conference, they had little actual place in it” (*WWH*, 120). Presenting himself as a radical feminist activist, Washington describes how he held secret women’s conferences in the attic of a dilapidated store in semi-secrecy: “We talked it all over, the needs of our women, the best ways of helping each other, and there was begun the first women’s weekly conference, which now numbers nearly three hundred women” (*WWH*, 121). The issues discussed in these covert meetings reiterate the advice given in Catherine E. Beecher’s *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841), updated in collaboration with her sister Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1896;

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<sup>78</sup> Dianne D. Glave, ‘A Garden So Brilliant with Colors, So Original in its Design’: Rural African American Women, Gardening, Progressive Reform, and the Foundation of an African American Environmental Perspective,’ *Environmental History* 8 (July 2003): 395.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 395-396.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.

Washington describes some of the issues addressed at his women's conferences: "The importance of ventilation, proper food, and cleanliness of body on the moral atmosphere of the home" (*WWH*, 126).

Contrasting the federal support of cotton culture and industrial fertilizers for farmers, Washington's insistence to think locally about food also reiterates women's dominance over private and local space. He writes, "In a country where pigs, chickens, ducks, geese, berries, peaches, plums, vegetables, and nuts and other wholesome foods could be produced with little effort, school teachers were eating salt pork from Chicago and canned chicken and tomatoes sent from Omaha" (*WWH*, 14). Washington calls this type of think globally act locally attitude his "doctrine of 'small things'"; for example, while the cowpea grows abundantly in Southern farms, and while it is "one of the most nutritious foods," the cowpea is used primarily as a fodder plant (*WWH*, 190). Tuskegee's own farm demonstration includes "eighteen different appetizing recipes for cooking the humble cowpea" (*WWH*, 190). Washington explains, "It was a small thing, but it was not too small to be overlooked in the effort to make the best of the resources close at hand" (*WWH*, 191). Through the discourse of women's gardening, Washington reclaims the cow pea as a natural resource overlooked by the agricultural industry. Turning fodder into "the most nutritious food," Washington's identification of potentially infinite resources available to promote the health and wellbeing of African Americans in the South performs what contemporary theorists call a deterritorialization and reterritorialization of space; spaces, resources, and populations that have been overlooked as useless or submarginal are recontained and reappropriated for production.

Able to purchase an abandoned plantation for the permanent site of the school, which essentially reterritorializes the plantation as a space of African American uplift, Washington describes how he and some students went into the woods to clear the land: "I determined to clear up some land so that we could plant a crop....It was hard for them to see the connection between clearing land and an education....I took my axe and led the way to the woods....We kept at the work each afternoon, until we had cleared about twenty acres and had planted a crop" (*UFS*, 62). Establishing an ideological association between the yeoman farmer and the construction of Tuskegee as an African American institution, Washington portrays the black yeoman as the masculine counterpart to the feminized domestic housekeeping movement in the sense that the yeoman's proximity to nature provides the impetus for a similar reterritorialization of the environment. Here the sentimental mode is ushered to the service of apparatus building; just as they begin planting crops, students dig into the earth to lay literal institutional foundations: "As soon as the plans were drawn for the new building, the students began digging out the earth where the foundations were to be laid, working after the regular classes were over" (*UFS*, 67). Similarly, Washington boasts that, "by digging out a large amount of earth from under the building we could make a partially lighted basement room that could be used for a kitchen and dining room" (*UFS*, 74). This collapse in the distance between the concept of foundations and the literal building of them epitomizes Washington's use of sentimentalism to define an altogether new relation between land, race, and the welfare institutions. His sentimentalism utilizes metaphors of environmental assimilation in order to compose this new cognitive map of the South that draws from the cunning intelligence related to local immediate experience.

Redolent with images of assimilation into the earth, Washington's depiction of racial uplift as a slow process can thus be seen not only as a reflection of his accommodationist attitude, but also as his representation of an alternative geopolitical map of the South where black agrarianism and participation in welfare institutions are a necessary and vital element of the

state. Washington therefore repeatedly refers to Tuskegee as a natural form that is implicitly a corrective to federal state building, insisting, “I thought it would be following a more natural process of development to teach them how to construct their own building,” that “we brought order out of chaos,” and that “we started as we did, and built ourselves up year by year, by a slow and natural process of growth” (*UFS*, 69,75). Merging literal and figurative, the fabricated and the natural, women’s domestic reform with the masculine yeoman ideal, Washington’s story of Tuskegee Institute weaves a complex web of affiliation and kinship that serves as a critique of an absent welfare state in the New South and supplements this lack with a more perfect vision of an organic state. Just as Ratzel believed that the health of the state depended on population growth, as noted earlier Washington ends his Atlanta Address by insisting that the “sixteen millions of hands” can either be preserved “or we shall prove a veritable body of death, stagnating, depressing, retarding every effort to advance the body politic.” Whereas notions of the German organic state devolved into a racist discourse, Washington never fell back on race as an identity in and of itself—in other words, race is never wholly natural to begin with and is seldom discussed without allusion to the state and by extension, infrastructure and machinery. For Washington, the folk represent not so much an essence as a geopolitical form of relation between land, people, and the state.

Just as the “soil” provides students at Tuskegee with access to “the real thing,” Washington likewise advocates hands on training for students in other fields: “In the course for steam engineers, the young men are able to study the working of eleven different steam engines, seven steam pumps, twelve steam boilers, and a complete water-works system, with miles of piping, valves, gauges, recording apparatus, etc” (*WWH*, 75). In the guise of educational apparatus, Washington lists a host of amenities that any municipality would covet: the Slater-Armstrong Memorial Trades Building “is lighted by electricity, and all the electric fixtures were put in by students who were learning electrical engineering; the power to operate the machinery in this building comes from a 125 horse-power engine and a 75 horse-power boiler” (*WWH*, 57). Likewise, “Arc and incandescent lighting is in use at the school, and there is a complete telephone service connecting most of the buildings and offices through a central station. Students learn not only how to install these systems, but to maintain them in the highest state of efficiency” (*WWH*, 76). In effect, Washington has created an entirely self-sufficient municipality with its own water-works, power plant, telephone service, hospital, orchards, dairy, and subsistence agriculture. Yet as an educational apparatus intended to get its students in touch with the “real” healthful influence of nature, Tuskegee blurs the distinction between natural and social structures in order to provide access to welfare services.

As noted earlier, in 1914 the Smith-Lever Act provided federal funds for agricultural extension, which went to white-run agricultural colleges to the exclusion of African American institutions. That same year, Washington established Baldwin Farms, a community program that enabled Tuskegee graduates to purchase forty acres of farmland; “The Tuskegee Farm and Improvement Company, which held the land, also mortgaged crops and equipment at eight per cent, whereas mortgage on the land was at six per cent.”<sup>83</sup> In resistance to federally funded and racially biased modern agriculture, Washington and the Tuskegee Institute fostered a practical, local, and techno-natural approach to agriculture in order to foster social, economic, and political inclusion within a welfare infrastructural apparatus. Published one year after Dr. Seaman A.

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<sup>83</sup> Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 213.



Knapp established the first demonstration farm for the Department of Agriculture in Terrell, Texas, teaching cotton farmers to combat the boll weevil, *Working with the Hands* develops what I call a cognitive map of a radically new synthesis of folk nature and the technologized state.

### **Conclusion: Posthuman Environmental Geography**

Washington's identification with feminized domestic work is evident in his love of gardening that he claims to have inherited from Mrs. Viola Ruffner, for whom he briefly worked as a houseboy. "I think I owe a great deal of my present strength and capacity for hard work," Washington writes, "to my love of outdoor life" (*WWH*, 152). Resonating with Roosevelt's fondness for the "strenuous life" in the wilderness, Washington goes on quite unexpectedly to describe the quite joys of gardening. He asserts, "If the garden be ever so limited in area, one may still have the gratifying experience of learning how much can be produced on a little plot if carefully laid out. . . . And then, though the garden may be small, if the flowers and vegetables prosper, there springs in us a feeling of kinship between the man and his plants" (*WWH*, 153). Here Washington rejects Teddy Bear Patriarchy's expansive and domineering approach to nature, preferring a "little plot" of nature for the sentimental bond that it nurtures between "man" and "plant," a strangely endearing posthuman claim, coming from Washington. Yet he delves deeper into the role of a cyborg kinship that relates the natural growth of gardens to his task of writing; unlike writing, which "never grows until you return and take up the work where it left off," Washington claims, "not so with the plant. Some change has taken place during the night, in the appearance of bud, or blossom, or fruit. This sense of newness, of expectancy, brings to me a daily inspiration whose sympathetic significance it is impossible to convey in words" (*WWH*, 153). This powerful metaphor of natural authorship sheds light on Washington's own attitude toward the process of writing *Up From Slavery* and *Working with the Hands*, both of which conflate autobiography with the history of Tuskegee's birth and development as an institution to suggest that self-formation and institutional formation are indissociably linked in a process of techno-natural growth.

Not a return to nature, Washington's autobiographies map hybrid identifications with nature's radical self-sufficiency as well as its subjugation under liberal capitalist and state management. *Working with the Hands* begins with an anecdote that evokes the black folk relation as a techno-natural form of kinship, depicting Washington's early employment as Mrs. Ruffner's houseboy. Known as a moralistic former Yankee schoolteacher, Mrs. Ruffner taught Washington the virtues of domestic science. Washington writes, "She said that all things could be done best by system, and she expected it of me, and that the exact truth at all times, regardless of consequences, was one of the first laws of her household."<sup>84</sup> The system referred to illustrates how, far from delimiting a realm of nature safe from industrial rationalization, the domestic realm absorbs and reiterates a Taylorist-like systematization that saturates all aspects of daily life. Washington describes how women's domestic science imparts a desire for a certain standard of performance that seeks to mimic the machine; he describes one of his tasks, mowing the lawn without a lawnmower: "I am not ashamed to say that I did not succeed in giving satisfaction the first time," Washington admits, but over time, he claims that "at last I made the turf in that yard

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<sup>84</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Working with the Hands: Being a Sequel to 'Up From Slavery' Covering the Author's Experiences in Industrial Training at Tuskegee* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1904), 7.

look as smooth and velvety as if I had been over it with the most improved pattern of lawn mower” (*WWH*, 8). Through his earnest participation in woman’s work, Washington not only crosses “natural” lines of race and gender, he also transgresses the technological distinction between human and the machine. Strangely, it is through his ability to become machine like, improving upon the patterns of a lawn mower, that Washington claims he first discovers nature; he declares, “When I saw and realized that all this was a creation of my hands, my whole nature began to change. I felt a self-respect, an encouragement, and a satisfaction that I had never before enjoyed or thought possible” (*WWH*, 9). Depicted as a scene of rebirth, Washington goes on to describe gardening as an “awakening power” that inheres in “tangible contact with nature” (*WWH*, 10). Born through a kinship between race, gender, nature, and machine, Washington’s strategy of survival bears a fascinating resemblance to Donna Haraway’s cyborg myth.

Haraway’s cyborg myth explores “the possibilities inherent in the breakdown of clean distinctions between organicism and machine.”<sup>85</sup> Directing her critique at ecofeminist critics like Carolyn Merchant, Haraway argues for relinquishing any a priori identification between women and nature. “Cyborg writing,” Haraway argues, “is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other.”<sup>86</sup> Gardening as a form of cyborg writing for Washington exemplifies how the environmental imagination factors into his process of racial uplift, of quite literal environmental writing as a political tool to mark the world that marked him. Likewise, in the preface to *Up From Slavery*, Washington claims, “[m]uch of what I have said has been written on board trains or at hotels or railroad stations while I have been waiting for trains,” suggesting that autobiography as self-authorship is on some level indissociable from the technologized world through which the self is formed “on board trains” (*UFS*, 5). Autobiography is based on the fiction of authentic access to the real material of an individual’s life; this is oddly juxtaposed with the railroads, a transit system essential to social welfare (communication, transportation, and access to resources) that experienced rapid corporatization and expansion after the Civil War.

In a letter written to John Randolph Lewis, it remains unclear whether Washington is riding on the train or defining a radical kinship with it:

Railroad fare from Tuskegee to Chehaw, .50	
... Chehaw to Atlanta, \$4.40	
... Atlanta to Washington, \$17.50	
Returning	
From Atlanta to Chehaw, \$4.50	
... Chehaw to Tuskegee, .50	
... Meals, lodging etc., \$3.00	
	Total, \$30.50

Yours truly,

Booker T. Washington<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s,” in *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 32.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>87</sup> Letter “To John Randolph Lewis,” in *The Booker T. Washington Papers Volume 3: 1889-95*. Ed. Harlan, Louis. (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1974), 425.

In this letter to Lewis, Washington itemizes the expenses incurred during his trip in May 1894, when he traveled to D.C. in order to lobby for the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition. Apparently testifying to the House Committee on Appropriations that he had journeyed there at his own expense, Washington was in fact reimbursed. What is interesting about this writing is how it contrast's with Washington's autobiography as it constructs the image of a self-made man; this letter, which reads more like a receipt, reveals how his finances flowed from the pockets of liberal donors even to cover the sum of 50 cents for the railroad fare from Tuskegee to Chehaw. Washington represents his agential status not through the declarative "I" that would point to the substance of his character, but rather through his total abstraction and assimilation into value figures and moving geographical points of reference. We can read his letter to Lewis as a narrative of self-making through which Washington accrues value via his ability to represent himself as the geographical movement of money--\$4.40 in Chehaw, \$17.50 in Atlanta, and so forth. Just as his spending increases as Washington approaches the seat of national power, his own "value" also reaches its height during his testimony before the House Committee. In this instance, the personality that Washington in effect sells to Lewis is the identity between black personhood and the technologized liberal state, the abstraction of racial personhood into an allegory of the virtual movement of money on the southern railroads.

Relating racial identity and democratic personhood, Priscilla Wald argues for an examination of both the analogy and disjunction between narratives of nation formation and the formation of racial authorial personality; personal narratives, Wald suggests, are shaped by national narratives that delimit "the cultural practices through which personhood is defined."<sup>88</sup> Wald turns to post-colonial models of disjunction in order to explain the rupture that the black subject brings to bear on cultural nationalism. Extending Fanon's psychoanalytically informed assertion about black personhood, Wald notes that this disjunction between narratives of black self-formation and cultural narratives reformulates national allegory.<sup>89</sup> Fredrick Douglass's *My Bondage My Freedom* (1855) for Wald represents a Freudian return of the repressed, the uncanny presence that returns to national narratives as "anxiety" and literary innovation, and ultimately reformulates national allegory. Wald argues that Douglass's transformation of the slave narrative into a nationalist genre was needed to fill a demand for an "indigenous American culture" that was being challenged and threatened by Native American demands for separate nation status.

Washington's autobiography evokes a similar anxiety that reveals the social function of Washington's work in mediating the tension between democratic ideals regarding the need for social welfare, and liberal capitalist expansion with the birth of the corporate personhood after the Civil War. The railroad is a prime example of this divergence in national identity; as corporatized entities, railroads symbolize the state's cooperation with corporate interest in the formation of its infrastructure. While the nation is beginning to understand the importance of welfare infrastructure such as clean water and sewage, the expansion of the transportation system privileged profit over public service. Development of infrastructure and of technologies for resource extraction went hand in hand with the Northern industrialists' unhindered profit motive in the South; when railroads were finally rebuilt after the war, Woodward describes that they only intensified the rate and depth to which natural resources could be exploited. Between 1880

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<sup>88</sup> Wald, Priscilla, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1995), 9.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

and 1881, at the beginning of the speculative boom, Northern and foreign capitalists invested massive amounts of money into Southern railroads that Woodward estimates at \$150,000,000 (*ONS*, 120). He writes, “The great empire builder of the Alabama mineral region was the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. In 1876 the L and N, whose stock was owned largely by foreigners, had approximately half a million acres of land in Central Alabama. In the early eighties the company laced the mineral area with a mesh of rails connecting Birmingham with Ensley, Bessemer, Helena, Talladega, Anniston, and other iron and coal towns, running spurs to mines and furnaces. There were thirty-two furnaces on its lines by 1887” (*ONS*, 126-127).

The railroads’ control over resources in the South had a negative effect on southern farmers who were subjected to discriminatory freight rates that discouraged the export of finished goods to the North. Evading regulation by the Interstate Commerce Commission, Southern carriers were given “legal sanction” to classify a “Southern Territory” with a rate differential that gave special rates “to facilitate the flow of raw materials, agricultural staples, fuel, and lumber into distant manufacturing plants” (*ONS*, 312-314). Washington’s free rides flout this one-way circuit of power enforced by the dominant transportation network of his time. The letter presents a cognitive map of how corporate interests regionally define the South while at the same time presenting a strategy for resisting and deterritorializing these relations by assuming the charge of black folk identification with abstract social value.

Yet at the same time, Washington’s organic state is founded on a strict doctrine of life—life that exists in death—after sublation into resource and raw material, after translation into labor power. What Washington’s cyborg writing resists is the extreme threat of death, which Abdul JanMohamed argues in *The Death-Bound Subject: Richard Wright’s Archeology of Death* (2005) illuminates the psychic structure that evolves in response to the violence and lynching that pervaded the nation-space after the Civil War. Most immediately and viscerally established through beatings and lynching, the threat of death, JanMohamed argues, forced African Americans to affectively bind with death in order to survive. Described in psychoanalytic theory as cathexis, “the investment of various objects with varying forms and degrees of affect,” JanMohamed examines cathexis in Marx’s theory of labor and analyzes the laborer’s potential for use-value or unused use-value.<sup>90</sup> Death for the slave represent an unused use-value that can potentially become a basis of resistance through symbolic death. Symbolic death requires the affective binding with death, the willingness to accept potential and imminent death, and “entails a rebirth, a radical transformation of the subject.”<sup>91</sup> It is basically only through the mastery of death, its transformation from use-value into exchange value through symbolic death, that the slave can survive. While JanMohamed relates cathexis to death in order to define African American cultural politics, I am attempting to relate race to a key facet of biopolitics—progressive power’s imperative to protect and manage life.

As a model black institution, Tuskegee became the heart of Washington’s attempt to protect African American life by merging it with a contradictory conservationist discourse. His greatest success in this regard came near the end of his life, with Tuskegee’s sponsorship of Negro Health Week in order to focus greater attention on public health.<sup>92</sup> An unpopular or perhaps even dangerous concept, at its inception as one day of the annual Tuskegee Negro

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<sup>90</sup> Abdul JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound-Subject: Richard Wright’s Archaeology of Death* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2005), 272-279.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>92</sup> Harlan, *Wizard of Tuskegee*, 233.

Conference in 1914, it was denied support by the Russell Sage Foundation, and when Washington attempted to expand the event to a national Negro Health Day in the following year, the Phelps-Stokes Fund donated \$500 but requested not to be named as a sponsor.<sup>93</sup> Historian Louis Harlan describes the original one-day conference as a hygiene fest:

Tuskegee's diary instructor contrasted sanitary and unsanitary milking and butter and cheese making. Dr. John A. Kennedy, head of the newly completed John A. Andrew Hospital at Tuskegee, and his nursing staff presented an exhibition on sanitation, nursing, and patent medicine frauds. George Washington Carver, the institute's chief agricultural expert, gave an exhibit of pure and impure water. Others talked on the proper care of teeth, of babies and children, or warned of the baneful effects of cheap whiskey and gin (*WT*, 233-234).

What is striking about this day is how closely it resembles women's benevolence work of the time, popularized by Florence Nightingale. Yet it was through such works of benevolence that women gained entry into national economic discourse, even if as a natural counterbalance against greed. Ultimately, benevolence organizations, according to Lori Ginzberg, both sought and received corporate status, which gave women greater control and power by allowing them to control large amounts of capital while in their personal lives, women's rights were truncated.<sup>94</sup>

Washington similarly straddles the ambivalent category of charity and corporation; as a non-profit organization, Tuskegee properties were exempt from taxation. Insisting on differentiating Tuskegee from other corporations, he asserts that, "[t]he moment the idea of 'making it pay' is placed uppermost, the institution becomes a factory, and not a school for training head and hand and heart" (*WWH*, 63). According to Haran, a few legislators did attempt unsuccessfully to tax the Tuskegee Institute as it began to prosper. In 1903, the town marshal tried to impose a privilege tax on the school's mechanical department, and in 1907, the Thompson bill proposed to tax Tuskegee based on its Greenwood Village (*WT*, 166-169). A significant difference between women's charities and Tuskegee was the effect of segregation. While women reformers brought about municipal reform through their role as municipal housekeepers, Washington was forced to develop the alternative strategy of creating an entirely independent welfare system that remained vulnerable to external critique. Yet the value of this emphasis on social welfare institutions is evident in his efforts to establish independent African American communities—in Greenwood Village and later Baldwin Farms. Begun at the same time that Washington initiated Negro Health Day, Baldwin Farms enabled Tuskegee graduates to purchase forty acres of farmland in an area that included a sawmill and a railroad spur line (*WT*, 213). Greenwood Village was perhaps more threatening because it included the layout for an entire village that included paved, lighted, and tree-lined streets, a city park, and a school for children (*WT*, 169-170).

Beyond being a "center of unselfish power" that counterbalanced the rise in corporate monopoly capitalism, Tuskegee blurred the distinction between community charity and individual self-help, between education, corporation, and a town's incorporation. The metaphoric cycling of death back into life is expressed environmentally as an ecological relationship to the natural cycles of life and death. Echoing Carver's ecological vision against waste, Washington describes how he reclaimed and recycled the abandoned plantation land around Tuskegee; he

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>94</sup> Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1990), 50.

describes how, “[t]he stable was repaired and used as a recitation-room, and very presently the hen-house was utilized for the same purpose” (*UFS*, 61). Beyond converting abandoned buildings, Washington clears land in the woods to plant twenty acres of crops in order “to secure some return from it” (*UFS*, 62, 65). Folding use-value back into exchange-value, Tuskegee Institute profits from the dual conception of nature as both living common ground and dead natural resource. “All the industries at Tuskegee have been started in natural and logical order, growing out of the needs of a community settlement,” explains Washington, and he insists that Tuskegee as an institution belongs democratically to its students (*UFS*, 79). It is this civic foundation that prevents Tuskegee from reproducing the corporatized exploitation of the environment—Tuskegee is quite literally both land held in common and land that secures a return, living earth and organic institution.

I have attempted to show that this kind of engagement with the environment emerges from a specifically raced and gendered cultural consciousness that aligns women and minorities with a duality in nature. Haraway’s insistence that access to nature can be used to undo the dominant Western ideal of origins is, I argue, exactly what municipal housekeepers and Washington put into practice by pushing on raced and gendered access to “nature” to effect progressive institutional reform. Municipal housekeeper Mary Ritter Beard published *Women’s Work in Municipalities* in 1915, one year after the creation of Baldwin Farms, and the year that Negro Health Day went national. In *Women’s Work*, Beard asserts that city planning enables women to engage and transform city infrastructure into welfare institutions in the way that Linda Gordon defines welfare—institutions that supports the well-being of the population.<sup>95</sup> Excluded from access to both state and federal funds for civic improvement, Tuskegee took a slightly different route, advocating a more explicit infiltration of infrastructure. As if accepting illegitimate affiliation and infiltration as a temporary alternative to such exclusion from the state, Washington ends *Up From Slavery* with a depiction of his return to Richmond: “As I write the closing words of this autobiography I find my self not by design,” Washington insists, “in the city of Richmond, Virginia...where about twenty-five years ago, because of my poverty I slept night after night under a sidewalk” (*UFS*, 145). Washington’s return allows the African Americans of the city to use, for the first time, the hall at the Academy of Music, where he gave a speech. Emphasizing the significance of being recognized by the state, he notes that the City Council along with the State Legislature, including the House of Delegates and the Senate voted to attend the speech as a body (*UFS*, 145-146). The narrative ends, “I delivered my message...and from the bottom of my heart I thanked both races for this welcome back to the state that gave me birth” (*UFS*, 146). Filling in the gap of his unknown biological birth, both in terms of his missing father and the unknown date of his actual birth, Washington implies the significance of the state’s supplement to biological life; metaphorically being born at the end of his narrative by “the state that gave me birth,” the state in which he first crept into the city’s sidewalk to find rest, Washington significantly concludes his narrative with this cyborg myth of the organic relationship between African American birth and kinship with the state.

Washington’s cyborg environmentalism is significant for the future of Ethnic Studies in its insistence that one needs to focus not only on cultural national identification but also on the material or environmental manifestations of the state. While he appears to have lost influence because of a perceived absence of radical politics in his doctrine, Washington’s rejection of

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<sup>95</sup> Mary Ritter Beard, *Women’s Work in Municipalities* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1915), 293.

nationalism and citizenship as the only route to justice anticipates the contemporary conception of the multifaceted nature of progressive power. While critics have forged important paths analyzing nationalist ideology and processes of nation-formation, less interest has been directed toward the progressive state. Commonly recognized as a proponent of black nationalism, Marcus Garvey claimed a revealing allegiance with Washington that illustrates the importance of his critique of the state. Garvey claims kinship with Washington's ideas, asserting that "I read 'Up From Slavery,' by Booker T. Washington, and then my doom—if I may so call it—of being a race leader dawned upon me in London...I asked, 'Where is the black man's Government?' 'Where is his King and his Kingdom?' 'Where is the black man's country, his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?' I could not find them, and then I declared, 'I will have to make them'" (*WT*, 280). Just as Garvey indicts the state's responsibility to provide the material structures that protect its populations (or else Garvey will have to "make them" himself), Washington strategizes multiple lines of access into the state by assimilating into its doctrine of biopower.

Aesthetically this engagement, which I have described as the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of space in the Black Belt, utilizes sentimental tropes that assume the charge of women's and race's identification with nature, to present an alternative engagement with the constitutive and enabling function of the state. This contrasts sharply with the popularity of nostalgic post-bellum pastorals that attempt to recapture the lost rural origins of the nation. Washington's insistence on the real, his dislike of fiction, must be read within this context of popular national disavowal of the present reality in the New South. Lisa A. Long takes note of a related gap in theoretical attention given to postbellum women's fiction. Asserting that feminist scholars tend to privilege the cultural work of antebellum sentimental fiction, Long argues that "critics have sought a particular kind of feminism in the works of these women writers—a cultural feminism that privileges 'women's ways' of knowing and doing."<sup>96</sup> Most notably for Long, writers like Rebecca Harding Davis and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, with their emphasis on realism and reform do not fit into the mold of sentimental fiction. Davis especially used her role effectively to enact welfare policies—influencing a revision of Pennsylvania law on the treatment of the mentally ill and the U.S. Congressional Report exploring the incorporation of education in prison reform.<sup>97</sup> I have attempted to situate Washington's work within this gap in women's sentimental literature in that it both evokes the sentimental mode and is primarily interested in postbellum reform.

*Up from Slavery* and *Working with the Hands* explores the potential within sentimental fiction to aesthetically represent the virtual remapping of space in the New South. Not quite successful in his attempts to incorporate the African American body into the emerging regime of public health, Washington's efforts were too limited in scope to significantly impact the federal and corporate domination of space. Yet this strategy still provides an important map that helps to bring into relief the foundational and complex relationship between race, nature, and the state in the expansion of U.S. liberal democracy. Washington embraces the nation's dependence on the black folk culture as an ideological representation of the productivity within the natural environment and the human race, as an example of what I have been calling a racial-

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<sup>96</sup> Lisa A. Long, "The Postbellum Reform Writings of Rebecca Harding Davis and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing*, eds. Dale M. Bauer and Philip Gould (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), 265.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

environmental shorthand not only of relations in the New South but of a global tension within liberal democracy. Representing “fall out” concepts such as the black yeomanry and women’s work that provide sources of unrecognized productive potential, Washington’s *Up From Slavery* and *Working with the Hands*, in adopting the strategies of biopolitical management, reveal the limits of progressive politics, its participation in a discourse of race and gender that frame capitalist expansion and its attendant weakening of the state as an opportunity for an economic and political return to nature. Fredric Jameson’s influential work on narrative and politics suggests that narrative is one way in which historic contradictions attempt to get worked out; Washington’s narrative form enables the perpetuation of the biopolitical paradox—the conflict between the demand for security (racialized exclusion) and the demand for freedom (cultural pluralism).



## Chapter Two

### Race, Bioregion, Biopolitics: Nisei Regional Literature

American literary regionalism has traditionally represented natural geographies to be a power free realm where natural laws maintain and preserve an isolated community from the risks of modern life. Bill Brown asserts that regionalism aesthetically relies on the production of a “regional artifact” that represents “enduring things...meant to promote access to more than merely regionalist thinking” by lending “access to something like a ‘human condition.’”<sup>98</sup> In this chapter, my analysis of Japanese American literature addresses the regionalist logic that structures ethnicity itself as symbol of the human condition, a reified “artifactual” nature. In *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging* (2007), Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak question the political possibilities available in the concept of a state of nature that provides access to a stripped-down, timeless, human essence (which is how ethnicity is often conceived). Spivak declares, “I think there are ways of understanding the state-of-Nature hypothesis as a kind of fiction that provides a perspective on a given society, perhaps even the perspective by which a critique of that society can take place. I’m not sure Rousseau, for instance, ever thought his state of Nature existed or should.”<sup>99</sup> Likewise, Butler takes issue with Giorgio Agamben’s conception of “bare life,” which assumes that a state of nature exists outside of the legal “protections” of citizenship, and cautions against the romanticization of nature because “stateless” persons “are without legal protection but in no way relegated to a ‘bare life’: this is a life steeped in power. And this reminds us, crucially, that power is not the same as law.”<sup>100</sup> Butler’s critique of “bare life” sheds light on the possibilities and the limits within regionalist literature’s representation of “natural” space and suggests that regionalism cannot provide access to a “human condition” or ethnic culture of nature not steeped in power. I contend that Japanese American regionalist literature utilizes regionalist tropes of environmental isolation and its relation to a human condition to present an undertheorized critique of the power structures that define the nation-state.

The early twentieth-century discourse of cultural pluralism illustrates a regionalist logic structuring the expansion of the New Deal state. This is particularly evident in the publication process of the American Guide Series by the Federal Writers’ Project that was essentially a national compilation of progressive pastoralism; regional cultural differences were celebrated as pockets of “outsides” to the capitalist domination of space and destruction of social life. The problematic that I examine is the seeming contradiction in Progressive policies toward the Japanese in California. On the one hand, the Progressive education movement in California influenced public education reform that resulted in the inclusion of Japanese American and other immigrant schoolchildren. On the other hand, Progressive anti-alien land laws excluded Japanese immigrants from agrarian land ownership as an attempt to conserve the state’s resources. Japanese American regional assimilation also brings to bear the unresolved question of how racial difference facilitates the expansion of the progressive state, by which I mean a state that

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<sup>98</sup> Bill Brown, “Regional Artifacts (The Life of Things in the Work of Sarah Orne Jewett),” *American Literary History* 17, no. 2 (2002): 197.

<sup>99</sup> Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging* (London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2007), 45.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

governs through the enforcement of life rather than the threat of death, what Michel Foucault calls the biopolitical art of government. Regionalist literature, in its tendency to essentialize the relationship between identity and place, uniquely engages biopolitical strategies of population management, which Foucault argues must occur passively through environmental controls. In his concept of biopower, the institutional “optimization” of human life is underpinned by a twofold approach: “the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations.”<sup>101</sup> Described as “a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize and multiply it,” biopower significantly illustrates the *raison d’être* of the progressive cause (*HS*, 137).

While Foucault accounts for racism through this lens of environmental control—arguing that scapegoating occurs so that racial minorities are geographically purged from the nation-state—his theory of biopolitics fails to address the progressive state’s idealization and protection of ethnic difference as an “artifactual” form of the “human condition” or cultural pluralism.<sup>102</sup> In order to address this gap, I examine the historic tension between the scapegoating of Japanese agrarian landowners and the progressive inclusion of Japanese American schoolchildren in public education reform and analyze how Japanese American regional literature attends to this seeming contradiction. Toshio Mori’s *Yokohama, California* (1949) and *The Chauvinist and Other Stories* (1979), Hisaye Yamamoto’s *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories* (1988), and Wakako Yamauchi’s *Songs My Mother Taught Me: Stories, Plays, and Memoir* (1994) are all collections that contain regionalist short stories about Japanese ethnic communities in Depression-era California; these texts both adopt popular identifications between race and nature, and, I argue, they attempt to re-orient or re-map the relations of power that such associations with the environment enable. Yet very little analysis has been done on the influence of Progressive and New Deal policies and attitudes on Japanese American regional literature.

As Colleen Lye contends, the alien land laws that denied Japanese immigrants access to agrarian land ownership in the early twentieth century ironically reflected Progressive conservationist concerns for environmental protection since the Japanese were scapegoated and perceived to be contaminating and depleting the soil. Yet as I will show through analysis of Edward K. Strong and Reginald Bell’s four-volume study of Japanese American schoolchildren in California, Progressives also sought to enable Japanese Americans by including them within progressive education discourse. I analyze Nisei, or second-generation Japanese American, regionalist literature and the regionalist problematic in order to show how these two seemingly contradictory attitudes towards the Japanese in fact represent a coherent environmental ideology of the Progressive and New Deal state. Applying Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s concept of Empire to the discourse of regionalism, I argue that ethnic literary regionalism necessarily brings into relief the “fault-lines,” the tensions between racial inclusion and exclusion that together form the single “productive” rubric of progressive management that produces regional identifications and geopolitical space; Hardt and Negri argue that the contemporary manifestation of power in Empire is defined by the biopolitical management of life in terms of production: “The great industrial and financial powers thus produce not only commodities but also subjectivities....[T]hey produce producers. In the biopolitical sphere, life is made to work for

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<sup>101</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978), 1:140. Further references to *History of Sexuality* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *HS*.

<sup>102</sup> Foucault, ‘*Society Must be Defended*,’ 254-255.

production and production is made to work for life.”<sup>103</sup> In other words, the value of production functions not only in economic transactions but also culturally and politically for overtly progressive aims. I argue that Japanese inclusion and exclusion represent different points in this circuit of production.

Although a seemingly smooth circuit, Hardt and Negri argue that biopolitical power is in fact geographically striated by “fault-lines.” An example of one such fault-line is the apparent dual location of Japanese immigrants and citizens as both external and internal to the state, a fault-line managed by a regionalist logic that uses space to mediate social tensions. Nisei regionalist representations of a state of Nature map the inconsistencies between the nationalist (production for life) and capitalist (life for production) organization of “natural” space. In Mori’s work, the state of Nature symbolizes productive energies that remain unused by the dominant assimilation of Japanese immigrants as a class of petty productive property owners as well as symbolizing the forms of identification that exceed the nationalistic conception of citizenship as productive participation within the nation-state. In other words, focusing on behavior and natural environments that are deemed unproductive by the ethnic community and by the larger society, Mori’s stories map an alternative relationship to biopolitical conceptions of productivity. Often dominated by stasis, his stories suggest the incomplete liberation that racialized citizenship yields and bring into relief the positive function that racial assimilation serves by culturally containing the opposition between the conflicting aims of liberal individualism and democratic freedom. Yamamoto and Yamauchi gender the state of Nature as a masculinist realm of commodification that participates in the domination of women’s reproductive destinies. Women artists often develop their own regionalist aestheticization of nature in order to dominate the nature that dominates them.

Finally, I assert that ideologies of race and nature in this period, particularly in relation to Japanese American assimilation, functioned as part of the logics that transformed citizenship in response to the post-frontier global crisis of liberal democracy. Historians have noted that capitalism reaches a spatial crisis with the closing of the global frontier. In the absence of “free” space, the social paroxysms caused by capitalist exploitation turn inward on the nation-state. This results in the crisis of liberal democracy against which in the U.S. the progressive welfare state was forged. As part of this progressive turn, American educators vaunted the universalization of citizenship through universal access to public education. As model students, Japanese Americans embodied a new type of citizenship that is no longer bound to the Jeffersonian ideal of agrarian land ownership; Japanese Americans instead embody a new version of citizenship more amenable to liberal capitalism in the post-frontier age, being indissociable from the progressive ideals of individual development wherein the subject learns to take himself or herself as the productive property that ensures individual freedom. Nisei regionalist cognitive mapping of the environment presents an unrecognized critique of this trajectory of racial assimilation and brings into relief how the Japanese immigrant community was geopolitically constituted within and through a regionalist liberal democratic art of government.

### **Biopower, the Japanese American Fable**

Foucault’s theory of biopower is useful for my schematization of the progressive turn in

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<sup>103</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000), 32. Further references to *Empire* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *E*.

racial politics for its suggestion that progressive politics, although a positive form of power, is yet anchored in violence. Despite biopower's importance for environmental studies in its suggestion that population expansion is already ideologically inscribed the progressive discourse of "environmental preservation," environmental criticism pays little attention to biopower. Population is a central issue for Progressive management in the post-frontier state as the welfare state emerges in response to spatial scarcity by intensifying or internally expanding its domain of control through population and resource management. Little has been written regarding the role that ethnic minorities play in the emergence of the welfare state, a transitional period that Hardt and Negri argue defined a pivotal transformation in liberal democracy that would lead to the ascendancy of U.S. power in the post-war era. I attempt to address this theoretical gap in my examination of the Japanese American regionalist writer, Toshio Mori, which explores how his work responds to the expansion of the New Deal state in California. With respect to the New Deal, cultural analysis has for the most part focused on recovering leftist politics in what Michael Denning has termed the "cultural front." Although resistance to the New Deal becomes radicalized, little attention is given to the populations that were excluded from the New Deal's statist approach to social reform.<sup>104</sup> My analysis engages a cultural critique of the state that emerges from within a marginalized immigrant Japanese community that functioned more as vehicles of the welfare state—a minority population that, while they lacked equal access to the benefits of Progressive and New Deal social and environmental reform, functioned to model for the broader population, the norms of "productive" economic and social behavior.

Furthermore, in focusing on an environmentalist literary critique of the New Deal, I hope to illustrate how the environment provides an invaluable yet overlooked material history of the power structures and racial politics that undergird progressivism. The term ecocriticism was coined by William Rueckert in 1978 to expand the realm of literary analysis to include the subject of ecology. Rueckert's interest in ecology stems from his desire to protect nature from human devastation, stating in his influential essay "Literature and Ecology" that "[t]he problem now, as most ecologists agree, is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community."<sup>105</sup> For Rueckert, ecocriticism's central aim is identical with the administrative aim of biopower—to preserve nature in order to preserve human life. In addition, ethnic identity is often seen to be at odds with discussions of ecological crisis; in the introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), Cheryll Glotfelty claims, "If your knowledge of the outside world were limited to what you could infer from the major publications of the literary profession, you would quickly discern that race, class, and gender were the hot topic of the late twentieth century, but you would never suspect that the earth's life support systems were under stress."<sup>106</sup> Ecocriticism tends to overlook how concern for the preservation and conservation of natural space has functioned as a biopolitical tool of the state in the twentieth century, specifically through the management of

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<sup>104</sup> Michael Szalay examines Dennings's problematic conceptualization of cultural radicalism in *New Deal Modernism: American Literature and the Invention of the Welfare State* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2000).

<sup>105</sup> William Rueckert, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1996), 107.

<sup>106</sup> Cheryll Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," in *Ecocriticism Reader* (see note 8), xvi.

minority ethnic populations.

In California, for example, New Deal progressives applied an ecological rhetoric to the Japanese population itself. In *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893–1945* (2005), Lye notes that Japanese farmers in California were doubly represented by governmental and civic organizations as threats to the natural environment and as embodiments of an environment needing preservation. Progressive conservationists feared that Japanese farmers caused soil erosion through their capacity for “working miracles of reclamation,” while the Japanese were also conflated with nature itself, being likened to a plant species subject to “uprooting, clearing, and replanting,” terms that suggested that the internment camps were akin to natural disaster.<sup>107</sup> In the rise of federal regulation of the environment and of human populations, raced and gendered identities occupy a vexed position—being associated with nature itself as objects of management, as well as with the subjective domination of nature. It is this capacity to represent the duality of nature within progressive ideology that makes the Japanese American essential to the expansion of the New Deal state. Cultural geographer Neil Smith defines this duality as the difference between the economic externalization of nature for use as a resource and the cultural universalization of nature as an ideal both internal and external to the individual; Smith argues that the external and the universal conceptions of nature are in fact joined in a dialectical relationship so that the universal conception enables the perpetual externalization of nature for profit.<sup>108</sup> Japanese Americans inhabit this contradiction, embodying both the economic mastery of nature as productive property owners and the politico-cultural conception of universal nature as a limitless internal state of ethnic difference. What is at the heart of this duality is an opposition between the economic and the politico-cultural conceptions of nature within liberal capitalism.

Participating in the cultural commodification of Japanese ethnic difference, Mori, Yamamoto, as well as well as a number of other up-and-coming Nisei writers, frequently contributed to a nationally circulating Nisei magazine called *Current Life*, which was published in San Francisco by the magazine's editor, James Omura. In the April 1941 issue, Armenian American writer William Saroyan predicts that a great writer will one day emerge from the Japanese American literary world. Having recently gained acclaim as a regional Californian ethnic author, Saroyan privileges ethnic difference as a form of identity through which the reading public gains access to a universal human condition, what Bill Brown suggests is the function of the regional “artifact.” “I look forward with eagerness to the emergence of an outstanding Japanese American writer,” Saroyan wrote: “I believe this event cannot be avoided; that sooner or later one of you must write that story.”<sup>109</sup> Saroyan calls upon the Nisei literary world to produce what he terms the “American fable,”

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<sup>107</sup> Lye, *America's Asia*, 61, 162.

<sup>108</sup> Neil Smith divides nature into two categories, external and universal nature: “On the one hand, nature is *external*, a thing, a realm of human objects and processes existing outside society. External nature is pristine, God-given, autonomous; it is the raw material from which society is built, the frontiers which industrial capitalism continually pushes back. As trees and rocks, rivers and rainstorms, it is external nature waiting to be internalized in the process of social production. On the other hand, nature is also clearly conceived as *universal*. For alongside external nature we have human nature, by which is implied that human beings and their social behaviors are every bit as natural as the so-called external aspects of nature” (Smith, *Uneven Development*, 2).

<sup>109</sup> “William Saroyan Salutes *Current Life*,” *Current Life*, April 1941, 8.

The life of the Japanese in California is rich and full of American fables that need to be told to other Americans. The others cannot tell these fables because at their source these fables belong to those who lived them; they must be written by those who lived them in order to become a part of the whole American life.<sup>110</sup>

Embedded in Saroyan's aesthetic theory is an ideology of nature that participates in what Neil Smith calls the "poetic" production of nature as a "universal" and timeless space. California, for Saroyan, represents a mythical nature in which life might truly be "lived." Japanese Americans can therefore claim cultural currency by exploiting their access to this geographic region that embodies a poetic ideal of American life, on the condition that they emphasize the "specialness" of being Japanese. He insists that everything this Japanese American writer writes "will be as valid for me as for him; that, while his work will spring from his own inner life, it will be universal. That in ratio to the specialness of his writing will be its universality."<sup>111</sup> Territorialized as if a unique geographical region, Japanese American difference for Saroyan is indissociable from the California landscape; Saroyan lends this advice, "the first place in which to begin to be at home is one's self; if one is effectively located there, he is pretty much located everywhere."<sup>112</sup> The nationalistic claim at the end of Saroyan's argument points to the cultural work of ethnic regional literature – Japanese American writers construct a regional space of difference, identified with a poetically universal space of nature that, being assimilated, preserves the content of human nature as a "regional artifact" within the form of nationalist citizenship, the "rich and full" experience of lives that have "become a part of the whole American life."

What seems problematic in Saroyan's model of ethnic regional identity as a national and in turn universal artifact is his insistence on a literary form that aligns regional production with the mythic mode that conflates geography with identity and overlooks the difference between California as a geopolitical region and Japanese American regional identification. More specifically, Saroyan's brand of regional literary production does not take into consideration the historical dependence of California's emerging economy on the commodification of both land and racialized labor. His interpretation of Japanese ethnic regionalism provides a cognitive map of regional assimilation as the trajectory from particularity to universal humanity; in this way, the development of Japanese American literature's institutional location, where a specific set of ideals are initialized, illustrates how biopower functions through a politico-cultural discourse of race and nature. The production of Japanese American literature actively creates ethnic difference as a vehicle through which the "rich and full" national landscape is restored.<sup>113</sup> I argue that biopower's cultural imperative for ethnic life both produces and preserves ethnic difference as a form of human nature identified with the regional difference of California.

Similarly, the New Deal's dissemination of cultural pluralism gave impetus to the widespread discourse of region, race, and nature. Far from unique, Saroyan's model reiterates the New Deal's institutionalization of ethnic difference through the Federal Writers' Project, which sought to preserve the values and the very life of liberal democracy in crisis. In "Regionalism in

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>113</sup> Amy Kaplan notes that the West has historically functioned, for regionalist writers, as a location in which "a utopian vision of national unity" is imagined ("Nation, Region, and Empire," in *Columbia History of the American Novel*, ed. Emory Elliot et al. [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1991], 262).

the Era of the New Deal” (2003), Lauren Coats and Nihad M. Farooq assert that the New Deal state harnessed the ideological power of regionalism to support its programs and policies to revive nationalist sentiment. With the resurgence of interest in American folklore, regional cultures and identities were embraced as evidence of how seemingly natural forms of community could be preserved from capitalist degradation, a threat spatially embodied in concerns over growing urbanization. Under the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Federal Writers’ Project was created to employ writers who were sent across the nation to survey its various regions. They produced “a nonfiction American Guide Series that would provide a state-by-state portrait of the nation [and] promote national pride in regional roots by ‘mapping an uncharted America.’”<sup>114</sup> Coats and Farooq suggest the proscriptive function of regionalism; more than simply reflecting existing regions, the American Guide Series, in “mapping an uncharted America” participates in the reterritorialization of space, in the regionalization of America.

The renewed interest in regionalism and race—what Horace Kallen theorized as “cultural pluralism”—valorized the distinct cultures and ethnicities that made up the nation, and participated in the discourse of biopower by supporting the preservation of “natural” spaces and identities within the nation-state and culturally promoting the belief that the state’s purpose is to reinforce the well-being of its people. Coats and Farooq assert,

The objective of regionalist representation in this era, it seems, was to maintain a subtle play between the emphasis on difference, on the one hand, as a means of keeping racial and socioeconomic hierarchies in place, and an erasure of difference, on the other hand, as a means of codifying and preserving stereotypes—thereby keeping these “threatened” (and threatening) personalities at a safe distance from “mainstream” white society.<sup>115</sup>

Coats and Farooq describe a new process of ethnic assimilation that progressivism inaugurates, which suggests that ethnics are both visibly stereotyped while at the same time assumed to assimilate into the universality of “mainstream” society. The way in which progressives played with racial visibility and invisibility resonates with Foucault’s description of how sexuality functioned to discipline bodies and populations. Compare this model of cultural pluralism to Foucault’s description of how sexuality functions in biopower: Sex—that agency which appears to dominate us and that secret which seems to underlie all that we are, that point which enthralls us through the power it manifests and the meaning it conceals, and which we ask to reveal what we are and to free us from what defines us—is doubtless but an ideal point made necessary by the deployment of sexuality and its operation (*HS*, 155). Like sexuality, racial difference and the natural environment are “ideal points” that must be both concealed and revealed in order to stage a trajectory of liberation into life as revealed meaning. This function of race and nature in the New Deal is like the role that sexuality plays in biopolitics, as it is “both the hidden aspect and the generative principle of meaning” (*HS*, 155). I define the state’s regionalist ecological idealism as this discursive production of race and nature in the New Deal that created a culturally generative principle to facilitate the state’s intensification and extensification of space that guaranteed the survival of liberal democracy; cultural pluralism participates in the regional production of space by remapping the nation into more intensely defined and differentiated

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<sup>114</sup> Lauren Coats and Nihad M. Farooq, “Regionalism in the Era of the New Deal,” in *The Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*, ed. Charles L. Crow (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 82.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

spaces.

In *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2002), Rey Chow asserts that Foucault's concept of biopower explains the contemporary commodification of ethnic identity, stating that, "the systematic pursuit and enforcement of *life* in modernity must be recognized as the backdrop to our controversial situations of racial and ethnic violence."<sup>116</sup> Chow examines this correlation between biopower and ethnic identification as a narrative in which ethnics function as "captives" that alternately preserve and liberate an Enlightenment-defined "human" subject. Chow terms this a "biopolitical transaction...whereby human rights, or more precisely, humans as such, are the commodity par excellence" (*PE*, 20). Whereas for Foucault, the modality of biopower is primarily a discourse of sexuality, I argue that race and nature, like sexuality, represent an ideological attachment to life itself.<sup>117</sup> Foucault asserts that ideology, and more specifically the "deployment of sexuality" is what "constituted the abstract discourse" that "coordinated these two techniques of power [the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations] in order to construct a general theory of it" (*HS*, 140). It is this function of abstract discourse that allows power to fade: "[T]he judicial institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses" so that "the law operates more and more as a norm" (*HS*, 144). By abstract discourse, Foucault means the way in which power becomes discrete or dispersed through various institutions and disciplines, so that biopower is not merely a scientific discourse, but a social norm. Ultimately, as power becomes culturally understood as a norm, a reversal occurs where "what was demanded" by power becomes generally "understood as the basic needs, man's concrete essence, the realization of his potential, a plenitude of the possible" (*HS*, 145). Just as sexuality becomes a seemingly "autonomous agency" that demands power's management, I argue that race and nature in the New Deal are institutionalized as forces that require progressive regulation by the state.

State regulation furthermore influences cultural production and results in the creation of a Japanese American literature pressured to idealize the relationship between ethnicity, nature, and the human condition. *Yokohama, California* appears to take cues from the WPA's production of African American folk culture as a generative principle that helps to revive nationalist sentiment; its title both presents ethnic regional difference and erases difference. Fictionalizing the ethnic community's actual location in Oakland, California, *Yokohama, California* employs the name of a city in Japan to emphasize the exoticism and difference within the Japanese community, which at the same time asserts an implicit erasure of difference in the assumption that "Yokohama, California" is like any other city in the nation. Eliding literal geographic referents, Mori must disturbingly estrange, erase, and write over Oakland in order to make this claim of universalism. According to a letter that Mori wrote to Saroyan about possibly changing the title just prior to the book's intended publication date, Mori states that Mr. Gipson, his editor at Caxton Press, "told me to think it over, saying the stories would right any misconception of the title. I don't know.

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<sup>116</sup> Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2002), vii. Further references to *Protestant Ethnic* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *PE*.

<sup>117</sup> Chow asserts "ethnicity" is "a category with mythic potential (since it is a kind of narrative of belonging) and is therefore manipulable (it is by appealing to people's sense of where and with whom they belong that political states manage to exert control over them)" (Chow, *Protestant Ethnic*, 25).



So far, I have been thinking of possible titles with no success.”<sup>118</sup> Whereas regionalist authors have tended to exploit the geographic marginalization of an American community to preserve certain cultural values being threatened by capitalist alienation (Sarah Orne Jewett’s romanticization of Dunnet Landing, for example), Mori’s title addresses a social segregation of the community that is as absolute as the difference between the reality of Oakland and the fantasy of *Yokohama, California*.<sup>119</sup>

A region that Gertrude Stein famously derided for having “no there, there,” Oakland is defined as a cultural wasteland precisely because it has been produced as an industrial zone, a major port city in the global capitalist structuring of space. For Mori, Oakland has no there there because its ethnic inhabitants remain invisible to national cultural consciousness. Stein’s willful blindness to the minoritized populations that inhabit this landscape elides the constitutive role that ethnic minorities including the Japanese have played in the regionalist production of space. Mori constructs an Oakland that paradoxically both does and does not exist, in the sense that it is both visible and invisible to national consciousness. While the allegorical location suggests Mori’s use of a mythic mode of representation recommended by Saroyan, in the introduction to *Yokohama, California*, Mori emphasizes the social reality being presented, asserting that “the people and incidents portrayed are very real, with more aspirations than outright successes. But there are no failures, no real losers or victims.”<sup>120</sup> These multiple negations, “no failures, no real losers or victims,” fervently evoke the opposite message that only by fictionally abstracting these people from their reality can they become visible and be seen not as failures, losers, or victims.

Emphasizing the territorializations of regional thinking brings into relief the complex role that racial ethnic citizens play in the liberal democratic production of space. With respect to the biopolitical construction of geopolitical regions, Chow refers to Chinese political prisoners, once visible as captives, who become liberated into an invisible universal human position when they are released into the West, thus participating in what Chow frames as the biopolitical enforcement of life. Mori puts pressure on this fantasy of ethnic liberation into Enlightenment-based universalism by questioning whether such assimilation marks a success or a failure. Whereas Chow and Foucault stage the trajectory of biopower from concealment to unconcealment or visibility to invisibility, Mori implies how this trajectory fails Japanese Americans. While Chow emphasizes the objectification of ethnic identity within commodification, one finds in Japanese American assimilation, the valorization of ethnic capitalists as being uniquely subjectified and culturally valorized by their economic position as entrepreneurs. The dominant cultural form of universalism is founded in citizenship and natural law, or the Jeffersonian belief in certain inalienable rights of citizenship. This version of natural law defines the possessor of natural rights as the rational, individual, and masculine national subject. Mori’s work subverts this dominant symbol of natural law by juxtaposing it with the

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<sup>118</sup> Toshio Mori, Letter to William Saroyan, March 1, 1942, Toshio Mori Miscellany, 1941-50, Bancroft Library Manuscript Collection, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>119</sup> In a letter written that same month, Mori informs Saroyan that he is “expecting the evacuation order any minute.” Mori’s title appears to be informed by his urgent sense of the spatial segregation that awaited him in the internment camp (Letter to William Saroyan, March 24, 1942 [see note 119]).

<sup>120</sup> Toshio Mori, *Yokohama, California* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1985), x. Further references to *Yokohama California* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *YC*.

freedoms available to the Japanese American subject who is liberated into the *economic* realm—the ethnic entrepreneur.

In *The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity: Small Business in the Japanese American Community*, Edna Bonacich and John Modell compellingly argue that the pre-war Japanese American community can be seen as part of a global phenomenon in which racial ethnic minorities were situated as economic “middlemen.” These middleman minorities represent a “premodern” form of group affiliation that nevertheless survives in modern capitalist societies and arises particularly in “response to the rapid growth of a new region.”<sup>121</sup> Bonacich and Modell thereby claim that the Japanese population is essential to the economic production of the region; this suggests a more complex process than what Saroyan assumes in his assertion that Japanese American writers merely “locate” themselves in the environment. Middleman minorities assumes the role of the “pioneer” that undertakes the risky work of opening up new industries.<sup>122</sup> This premodern form of class affiliation therefore arises because it can be more efficient than the modern form of impersonal contracts in part due to the middleman minority's reliance on the unwaged labor of family (women and children) and friends. Japanese American structural economic assimilation as a counterpart to their national assimilation suggests that ethnic minorities also participate in the more “positive” aspects of the biopolitical management of space; with respect to Nisei regional literature, the cultural and political consequences of the specific form of economic assimilation that the Japanese community in California achieved prior to World War II is reflected in the fetishization of the ethnic group as a petit bourgeois class.

The petite bourgeoisie characteristically own petty productive property that they mix with their own labor, and according to Stephen S. Fugita and David J. O'Brien, Japanese representatives from this class could vary from owners of farmland to the self-employed launderer and gardener.<sup>123</sup> It is this flexibility within the petit bourgeois organization that enables the conception of the class both as subjects or agents of capital and as objects or commodified labor. Fugita and O'Brien claim that the Japanese American petite bourgeoisie created a “moral economy” that stood in opposition to California's big business and embodied the virtues of “rugged individualism” and hard work; as a result, they functioned to “roll back the state,” and actually created new opportunities for further capitalist development.<sup>124</sup> While Fugita and O'Brien do not directly address the New Deal context, Japanese American economic middlemen can be seen as an essential counterbalance of power against the rise of the “factory farm” in California. Japanese American representation of petit bourgeois ideals such as “rugged individualism” and entrepreneurship reinforce the bond between the national ideals of personhood and the preservation of a capitalist work ethic in the New Deal.

Because a petit bourgeois or middleman economy depends on trust and community affiliation, it relies at least on the surface on the maintenance of human relations embedded within the very definition of ethnic group solidarity; Fugita and O'Brien argue that because of their Japanese petit bourgeois class position, “there will be a greater degree of continuity in the meaning of ethnicity in successive generations of Japanese Americans than is typically found

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<sup>121</sup> Edna Bonacich and John Modell, *The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity: Small Business in the Japanese American Community* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980), 32.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 18.

<sup>123</sup> Steven S. Fugita and David J. O'Brien, *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1991), 48.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

across generations in many other ethnic groups.”<sup>125</sup> In other words, Japanese assimilation follows a fundamentally different trajectory where assimilation encourages rather than erodes ethnic group solidarity. More specifically, Fugita and O'Brien extend claims made in the prior study by Bonacich and Modell, asserting that the persistence of ethnic identification and community solidarity are directly attributable to the economic assimilation of Japanese immigrants into the petite bourgeoisie. What their emphasis on structural economic assimilation suggests is that rather than eroding ethnic identification, the assimilation of the Japanese immigrant population prior to World War II required a certain *presentation* of ethnic difference in order not to fall into the category of commodified labor. Saroyan's emphasis on the exemplarity of the Japanese American cultural contribution to the depressed nation as the preservation of a universal human nature contained within Japanese American racial citizenship must therefore be understood within this economic context. I argue that in the New Deal context, this “preservation” of identity in ethnicity in fact must be seen as one way in which cultural endorsement of capitalism is perpetuated through the racial production of human nature or a human condition (“rugged individualism”) that I will examine as an essential component of the biopolitical processes of life for production and production for life.

Contrary to Chow's nationalist model of captivity and liberation within universal citizenship, *Yokohama, California* represents how the Japanese racialized economic position results in an incomplete liberation. The collection begins with the story of its first non-victim in “The Woman Who Makes Swell Doughnuts”; written in 1941, the story paints a portrait of an unnamed woman who is entirely excluded from the public sphere, she is exploited for her unwaged labor on which the middleman minority economy gains its profits: she has “given birth to six children, worked side by side with her man for forty years, working in the fields, working in the house, caring for the grandchildren, facing the summers and winters and also the springs and autumns, running the household that is completely her little world” (*YC*, 22). Mori thus aligns the petit bourgeois dependence on the unwaged labor of women as essential to the biopolitical circuit of life for production and production of life. Yet this anonymous woman's entrapment in the bodily economy of biological reproduction prevents her from developing a full personality; the woman is only identified as “common” and “living out her days in the little circle, perhaps never to be exploited in a biography or on everybody's tongue, but enclosed, shut, excluded from world of news and newsreels” (*YC*, 23, 24). The narrator eschews the liberation narrative of personal development, suggesting that cultivating one's personality only leads to exploitation, and instead imagines the woman's entrapment as a kind of sanctuary for both the narrator and for the woman herself: because she is isolated, “inside of her she houses a little depot” (*YC*, 25). What is significant here is the way in which the sketch spatializes intersubjective experience (identity as a “depot”) to imagine an alternative realm of productive work where the woman's identification with labor is not simply exploitative but subjectivizing—it is the doughnuts that she makes in her spare time that are “most unique” (*YC*, 24). The narrator wonders, “Perhaps when I am eating her doughnuts I am really eating her” (*YC*, 23). Engaged in work that falls out of the rubric of productive woman's labor, doughnut making stands in for something like craft or artisanship that provides an alternative spatio-temporal matrix for subject formation and intersubjectivity.

Elaine Kim has noted that “The Woman Who Makes Swell Doughnuts” reflects Mori's “metaphysical” (apolitical) style; the narrator's consumption of the woman's body recasts the

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

religious symbolism of bread representing the body of Christ.<sup>126</sup> Sau-ling Wong similarly asserts that “[t]he sacramentalization of quotidian experience in Mori’s sketch parallels, in a sense, the alchemical emphasis of the melting pot myth.”<sup>127</sup> I argue that this story’s emphasis on labor, regional agrarian labor, and individual development significantly engages the key terms of liberal economism in its critique of liberal democratic subject formation, the commodification of human life through labor; the story instead proposes an alternative cognitive map of the woman’s position within the ethnic economy; the story graphs the way in which California’s regional economy fails to fully utilize or liberate the ethnic, who remains captive in her identity. “The Woman Who Makes Swell Doughnuts” maps something like the individual’s unused productive potential, what Foucault calls human capital, which fails to be utilized by the woman’s participation in the racialized regional economy. The story further explores the political ramifications of human capital, as the anonymous woman, presumably a first generation, or Issei, denied access to citizenship, also fails to be liberated within the liberal economic position of the middleman minority and thereby falls back on what Hannah Arendt identifies as prepolitical citizenship, which makes visible how the freedom of citizenship is created through the denial of this right to select groups of people.

Identified with the underside of citizenship that is thematized in her negative relationship to liberal individualism, the woman also delineates a state of nature or a realm of natural rights that exists outside of both citizenship and full participation in economic production, outside the circuit of production for life and life for production. The story pushes the concept of natural rights away from the proper subject of rights. Subjectivity, usually associated with a character’s interiority, is associated with the commodification of the individual or being “exploited in a biography.” While personality is explicitly associated with capitalist alienation, what Benjamin identifies as the alienation of the individual from the whole, the absence of personality becomes the naturalized grounds for intersubjective ethnic identification.<sup>128</sup> Closing with the narrator hoping to “keep alive what is alive in her...expressly myself,” the story schematizes ethnic inheritance, as the narrator’s inheritance of the woman’s productive energies that exist outside of the biopolitical circuit of life for production and production for life (*YC*, 25). In other words, racial inheritance is staged as the transmission of the excessive productive capacity that remains unused by the capitalist alienation of labor.

This alternative inheritance of ethnic identification is thematized in Mori’s stories as an alienation from the alienation of capitalist subject formation. In a story that appears later in the collection titled “He Who Has the Laughing Face,” the character is identified as “the Japanese” only to emphasize his “common” identity. Like the woman in the previous story, he is marginalized by the dominance of the petit bourgeois economy; the narrator describes how this man sits in the park during his time off from working as a truck driver for a laundry company: “He, the Japanese, was sitting on the park bench on Seventh and Harrison, looking and gazing at the people without much thought....[H]e simply sat and pretty soon from his sadness, and aloneness, he began to smile, not from happiness, not from sadness, and this is where I saw his face, not a handsome one but common and of everyday life” (*YC*, 121). Unable to define the

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<sup>126</sup> Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1982), 170.

<sup>127</sup> Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature*, 75.

<sup>128</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 88.

man's interior state, the narrator notes that the man named Tsumara is simply not "handsome." The word "handsome," literally read as "in the hand," conflates attractiveness with being self-possessed. Lacking self-possession, the man appears neither to present nor conceal himself. In a state of sublime inaction, he sits in the park as a symbol of how the common man claims the commonplace: "with the same lazy easy eyes of Sunday," Tsumara sits in the park during the weekday "without austerity, without a wit of sadness, sitting, basking, drinking, not singing dramatically...not writing to bring tears or happiness, not using, not playing, not living heroically in one word perhaps, but alive" (*YC*, 123). The first set of gerunds establishes Tsumara's relationship to the literal commons, the public park, whereas in the previous story, the woman herself represents a virtual commons where she and the narrator establish an identification in a "power-free" realm that exists outside the dominant biopolitical ordering of space, inside something like the unharnessed space of Japanese creative potential spatialized as a public "depot." The second set of gerunds represents the narrator's inability to establish a similar kind of access to Tsumara's interiority, the terrain of his human condition.

Defined entirely through his negative relationship to agency, Tsumara, the narrator concedes, has no there there to represent. "[U]naware of human ears and human eyes listening and noticing and probing," Tsumara resists the narrator's desire "to identify him, to put him down as he was, to seek out through words and gestures, the man he really was" (*YC*, 123,124). This utter quiescence in Tsumara points to a state of human nature that exists outside of the narrator's and the employer's use just as Tsumara's nature also resists being preserved through the narrator's attempts at poetically representing a universal humanity. Altogether resisting ideological inscription, "He Who Has the Laughing Face" revises the Whitmanesque identification of personalities with regional landscapes and presents a cognitive map of an imagined outside to power both in the literal commons and the locations within human nature that escape ideological inscription. This forces the narrator to re-examine the self-alienation that is imagined to be the foundation of liberal individualism and identity itself; it is the narrator's desire for a representable interiority, "for great thoughts," "expecting a miracle" out of his talent, that compels his desire to aesthetically objectify Tsumara. Unlike Tsumara, the narrator visits the park daily to read and write and develop his dream of becoming a writer, and implicit in the comparison is the conjunction between modern objectification and the liberal Progressive privileging of individual development.

"The Seventh Street Philosopher" emphasizes a certain social and economic destitution that implies an incomplete liberation, which the story allegorizes through the figure of the amateur or dilettante who refuses to develop his individual skills. The narrator describes an aging Issei man, Motoji Tsunoda, whose vocation as a wealthy elderly woman's launderer stifles his "natural" vocation as a philosopher. Like "The Woman Who Makes Swell Doughnuts," Tsunoda's marginalization from the petit bourgeois economy leads to his social invisibility. Although he "loved...to spout philosophy and talk to the people" he lives confined in "a sad washroom in the old lady's basement" in "obscurity" (*YC*, 26). The narrator insists that it is "working" in these conditions that "has quite a bit to do with his behavior" in public (*YC*, 26). Tsunoda's economic alignment with the underclass, symbolized by his basement work, contrasts with the rest of the ethnic community where people wish only to talk "business" and have no time for more humanistic pursuits. The narrator describes the town's exasperation with Tsunoda, "[t]here is nothing like it in our community, nothing so fruitless and irritable which lasts so long and persists in making a show" (*YC*, 26). The "show" projected by Tsunoda's very public display of his desire for a true vocation displays the wrong kind of visibility, and rather than showing how

the town's economic assimilation positively reinforces ethnic identity, Tsunoda's self-presentation makes visible how economic assimilation actually impoverishes the town's ethnic cultural expression. Tsunoda's expressions of marginalization, which are suggested by the topic of his speeches, "What is there for the individual to do today?" and "An Apology for Living," embrace what the community itself wishes to deny; he is the only town member aware of Japanese religious philosophy and its relation to an American tradition, comparing Saint Shinran to Emerson, and in this sense Tsunoda cleaves to a more egalitarian sense of assimilation – the merging of two cultures.

The narrator imagines that Tsunoda uses his marginal position to find empowerment through culture, which is described as the "wonderful...spectacle" through which this "meek man becomes magnificent" and "powerful" (YC, 28). Noting at the end of "An Apology for Living," that "I firmly believed Motoji Tsunoda was on his own, a philosopher by rights, as all men are in action and thought a philosopher by rights," the narrator's solitary valorization of the town's pariah idealizes the natural rights available outside of both citizenship and petit bourgeois property relation by again idealizing the ethnic cultural worker's distance from capitalist subject formation (YC, 30). "The Seventh Street Philosopher" characterizes Tsunoda's failure to be productive or successful in his humanistic vocation as a form of protection from full assimilation into the ethnic economy that alienates individuals from alternative forms of production and life. Through the figure of Tsunoda, story politically functions to map the Issei's alternative claim to equality as an "action" of claiming his "right" to a vocation outside of the ones ascribed to the ethnic economy, claiming one's right to rights. Issei alienation inscribes a state of nature that revises dominant modernist representations of alienation characteristically as the alienation of the individual from the self or the inability to develop the self. For Tsunoda, alienation from his peers and from any possibility of developing his skills is embraced by the narrator as a political right to an alternative form of productive expression.

In a story written in 1937 titled "The Distant Call of Dear," which was published in *The Chauvinist*, Mori's second collection of stories, Togo Satoshima is an amateur musician who can be seen as a precursor to the dilettante Seventh Street Philosopher. Satoshima spends most nights practicing the Japanese flute or shakuhachi in the tankhouse behind his home. Again Mori suggests that economic assimilation is dehumanizing, forcing Japanese cultural expression into the margins of daily life. Yet it is Satoshima's amateurish practice of the Japanese musical form that makes him socially visible: "Soon he began to have the undivided attention of the neighborhood. People who did not trouble to know him before began to notice him."<sup>129</sup> In this story Satoshima's day job is not identified (it is only implied by the fact that he plays almost exclusively at night). While "The Seventh Street Philosopher" attempts to make a more decisive connection between economic assimilation and the deprivation of cultural expression, "The Distant Call of Deer" is significant for the way in which it celebrates an alternative anti-developmental trajectory. Satoshima is a fifty-three-year-old Issei man with a twenty-five-year-old Nisei daughter; he repeatedly competes in amateur nights with the Nisei generation: "Out of the fourteen contestants who performed that night in the Asahi Auditorium all but Togo Satoshima were youngsters. Youngsters who were in high school or the graduates who worked somewhere or did not have jobs. There were three contestants of grade-school ages but this did

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<sup>129</sup> Toshi Mori, *The Chauvinist and Other Stories* (Los Angeles: Asian American Studies Center, 1979), 35. Further references to *The Chauvinist* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *TC*.

not stop Togo Satoshima from doing his best” (*TC*, 37). Yet unlike the youth of the Nisei generation that implies the future development of their artistic talents, Satoshima's talent stubbornly refuses to develop, a refusal emphasized by his inability to perform any song other than “The Distant Call of Deer.” Still Satoshima’s simple faith is valorized by the narrator: All Satoshima requires is “but a few votes” for him to “firmly believe...in himself and his call for art” (*TC*, 37). Rather than admonishing the thwarted artist, the narrator relishes the amateur’s faith in his “natural” talents despite his lack of development; this valorization of the amateur artist illustrates how Mori’s work engages a discourse of productive human potential to compensate for the deprivations in socio-political life, suggesting that Japanese productive energy, what Foucault call “human capital,” in falling out of the dominant disciplinary institutions, lays claim to a state of nature or human condition that presents a vital critique of progressive state’s inability to properly harness Japanese American human capital in the freedoms made available through the discourse of liberal democratic progress.

### **The Death of Man and the Birth of Racial Citizenship**

Claiming a right not to improve or professionalize, the Issei artist maps an alternative engagement with the Progressive education movement and its thematization of personal vocational development as a solution to modern alienation. In *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-1949* (2000), David K. Yoo brings much needed attention to the formation of the Japanese American community in California through expansions in the progressive state. “An important access point to the Nisei past in California,” Yoo writes, “has been the documentary base generated by studies conducted with Japanese Americans before and during World War II. In the interwar years, researchers from Stanford University and the University of Southern California administered intelligence tests, engaged in fieldwork, and compiled information in the greater San Francisco and Los Angeles area.”<sup>130</sup> The Nisei, Yoo significantly notes, came of age in California's public schools during a crucial time of progressive reform when “[n]ew findings in psychology and the social sciences would enable experts to tailor instruction to the needs of an incredibly diverse student population. The conviction that education could solve social inequalities took on mythic proportions” (*GN*, 20). One can begin to see how the “myth” of the school comes to substitute the myth of the Jeffersonian land ownership as both the basis of citizenship and the solution to rising class tensions; Progressive education provides access to a second order nature within welfare institutions like the public school as well as within the individual’s own “natural” abilities. Yoo asserts that, “[t]he inability of politicians to ameliorate a depressed economy became associated with the 'old' education that progressives intended to overhaul” (*GN*, 21). Analysis of Japanese American assimilation as it is theorized in Progressive education discourse sheds light on the substantial role that these racialized citizens played in the biopolitical transformation of citizenship into a form more compatible with the management of the population through citizenship’s association with general norms of social behavior such as the privileging of possessive individualism.

With what Foucault calls the “death of Man,” in which human life itself becomes an object of scientific management, the individual in his or her specificity is superceded by the

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<sup>130</sup> David K. Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-49* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2000), 7. Further references to *Growing Up Nisei* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *GN*.

abstract conception of man as a species or population. Social scientific analysis of Japanese American students deals with education in citizenship as one of the essential tools of abstract population management. Ethnic minorities lend themselves to this type of analysis because they are doubly defined by individual and group identification; Chow asserts that, “The ethnic is both a universal, a condition in which everyone can supposedly situate himself, *and* the local, the foreign, the outside, the condition that, in reality, only some people branded ‘others,’ (are made to) inhabit” (*PE*, 39). While Chow argues that ethnics waver between these two identifications based on the political agenda at hand, Yoo emphasizes the local specificity of Nisei subculture:

Rather than serving as mere way stations en route to assimilation, Nisei organizations, experiences of prejudice, and the immigrant community actually reinforced the generational and racial-ethnic identities of American-born Japanese....As Lisa Lowe has pointed out, distance from the American cultural sphere, instead of reflecting a failed integration, preserved Asian American culture (*GN*, 8)

I am interested in examining Nisei subcultural production in relation to the discursive production of social scientific definitions of universal citizenship. It is therefore necessary to contextualize Mori’s stories of subcultural life *within* emerging social scientific discourse, and to read his stories as attempts to engage and transform the definitional possibilities within Japanese American citizenship.

In this section I will focus on an early version of the myth of Japanese Americans as a model minority, evident in a four-part study published by Psychology professor Edward K. Strong and Reginald Bell, a professor of Education, at Stanford University between 1933 and 1935. I will focus on the three studies written by Strong, *Vocational Aptitudes of Second-Generation Japanese in the United States* (1933), *Japanese in California: Based on a ten percent survey of Japanese in California and Documentary Evidence from Many Sources* (1933), and *The Second-Generation Japanese Problem* (1934). The problem that these studies address is the emergence of a population of second-generation Japanese who effectively transform an excluded immigrant group into legitimate U.S. citizens. Roger Daniels asserts that the biological reproduction of the Japanese immigrant community was an issue of popular and professional concern so that “the greatest danger to white California came from the high birth rate of these alien people.”<sup>131</sup> This concern over managing the Japanese capacity to reproduce life, which implicitly overlaps with the production of racialized citizens, is addressed in the work compiled by the State Board of Control *California and the Oriental: Japanese, Chinese, and Hindus* (1922) in which the governor of California expresses his fears that “the fecundity of the Japanese race far exceeds that of any other people” (*PP*, 89). Yet while Japanese immigrants were increasingly excluded from land ownership through alien land laws in 1913 and 1922, which culminated in the 1924 Immigration Act that completely restricted immigration from Japan and can be seen as an attempt to purge the population to enhance life within the state, Progressive educators in California, according to Judith Rosenberg Raferty, were at the same time seeking ways to best integrate Japanese and other immigrant children. In *Land of Fair Promise: Politics and Reform in Los Angeles Schools, 1885-1941* (1992), Raferty argues that

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<sup>131</sup> Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1977), 89. Further references to *Politics of Prejudice* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *PP*.



while the movement began through women's civic organizations to establish kindergartens in the Los Angeles school district, the problem of education soon became assumed by “professionals” who attempted to apply principles of scientific management to public education and the problem of minority assimilation.<sup>132</sup> One can see in the application of scientific principles to the management of human populations that there is an intersection between the externalization of Japanese farmers based on natural resource management and the inclusion of Japanese school children as a human resource; Hardt and Negri call this intersection “network power,” which describes how power functions through the dual processes of expansion and inclusion.

While externalization and integration of racialized populations appear to be contradictory, the process gains cohesion when regarded through what Hardt and Negri identify as the expansion of Empire based on biopolitics, which co-ordinates seemingly contradictory forces through the unifying concept of production; in other words Japanese “reproductive capacity” is both externalized as a threat to the expansion of productivity on the land and included as an ideal population whose productivity might be directed by proper social scientific management. The contradictory presence of Japanese immigrants as both aliens and citizens also reveals a fragmentation and shift in the conception of citizenship in the early twentieth century. Hardt and Negri suggest that the transition from Progressivism through the New Deal represents a radical transformation in liberal democracy, an argument that I will explore in greater depth in the following section; I examine this shift through the ideological production of Japanese American ethnic difference. The ascendancy of social scientific population management for Foucault is a symptom of the death of Man, which results in the reduction of humanity to a scientifically mastered form of nature. What social scientific work like Strong’s studies illustrate is the constitutive role that the assimilation of Japanese racial minorities played in the objectification of human and more specifically in applying the scientific mastery of human nature to the modernization of citizenship according to the biopolitical management of the relationship between populations and the environment.

Strong’s work in the inter-war years applies social scientific tools to the “problem” of the Japanese in California in such a way that conceptualizes how the art of government utilizes social scientific forms of knowledge particularly for the management of citizenship. The appropriateness of the Nisei as new citizens provides the central thesis in Strong’s work. First he applies various I.Q. Tests that have been created based on the Stanford Revision of the Binet scale; the Binet scale was developed to measure the intelligence of soldiers registering for military service during World War I. Second, Strong gathers statistical data on the Nisei through a survey of ten percent of the second-generation Japanese in California. In the introduction to this second study, *Japanese in California*, Strong argues that “[f]acts” are what “help us to understand what kind of people these Japanese are. And that seems to be a very necessary first step in solving or in helping to solve their problems.”<sup>133</sup> Scientific knowledge, Strong suggests, will resolve the mystery of race as “these facts will give to the whites a truer picture of the Japanese than has yet resulted from the propaganda of agitators, both those favorable and

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<sup>132</sup> Judith Rosenberg Raferty, *Land of Fair Promise: Politics and Reform in Los Angeles Schools, 1885-1941* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1992), 15-146.

<sup>133</sup> Edward K. Strong, *The Japanese in California: Based on a Ten Percent Survey of Japanese in California and Documentary Evidence from Many Sources* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1933), 192. Further references to *Japanese in California* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *JC*.

unfavorable to the Japanese” (*JC*, 191). With objective scientific analysis, the problem of race and class conflict is transformed into an epistemological problem solved through social scientific knowledge, where “seeing the true picture” is synonymous with the accumulation of quantifiable data. Yet Strong encounters a limit to knowledge in the youth of the second generation: “the entire group averages 9.9 years of age and only 12.1 per cent are 18 years and over in age” (*JC*, 269). The stated intention of this study of Japanese in California is to examine “how second-generation Japanese differ from first generation,” yet Strong finds himself immediately qualifying this statement, claiming that “there are too few data concerning the occupational activities of the second generation, and they are too young to permit a valid conclusion on this point” (*JC*, 191, 192).

The Nisei are ironically reduced to silence through the very survey intended to represent them. While 78% of Japanese immigrants surveyed responded that “race has been no handicap in choosing their occupation...with regard to the second generation it is evident that the Japanese high-school boys, and even more the college men, feel handicapped because of their race” (*JC*, 307). Strong qualifies his findings of racial prejudice with the argument that those surveyed are too young and disinterested to have an opinion, with 42% failing even to respond to the survey, and suggests that the youth are prone to suggestion, “they had never even thought of it [race] before”; this implies that the problem “is suggested to them by the question” (*JC*, 308). With race imagined to be a pre-conscious state, as “the second generation is not yet old enough to have had actual experience,” Strong creates the rationale for his specific intervention, his proscriptive use of I.Q. Tests in his first study (*JC*, 308).

What seems significant here is the discursivity of race, that racial-ethnic difference is being produced as an object of knowledge through the very repression of knowledge, where race is a secret “problem” lurking beneath the surface of identity and magically divulged through analyses of I.Q. texts. Foucault famously argues that sexuality produces a rational discourse as “a secret whose discovery is imperative, a thing abusively reduced to silence, and at the same time difficult and necessary, dangerous and precious to divulge,” and one can see in Strong's fascination with the knowable data surrounding Japanese American schoolchildren the infinite productivity of the social scientist's desire to create a body of racial knowledge (*HS*, 35). The schoolboy, for Foucault, becomes the locus of German scientific discourse on adolescent sexuality in the eighteenth century and illustrates how this explosion in discourse surrounding education and sexuality reveals the ubiquitous and covert manifestations of power with the rise of the bourgeois subject. Anne Laura Stoler argues for a re-examination of Foucault's critique of sexuality through the related production of race, suggesting a correlation between the ways that sexual and racial identities are regulated by a “repertoire of sensibilities that were glossed as 'personal character' and carefully marked the boundaries of race and class.”<sup>134</sup> Likewise for Strong, as I will show, the aim of his study is the aestheticization of Japanese American intelligence as an innate sensibility necessary for the preservation of democracy.

For what concerns Strong is the threat to democracy posed by the spatial problem of modern alienation and urbanization; the Japanese only exemplify the general problem of massification faced by the larger population. What is significant here is that the gendering of the Nisei schoolboys results not in a proliferation of knowledge regarding sexuality as Foucault argues, but rather results in a proliferation of race discourse as part of the study's attempt to

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<sup>134</sup> Ann Laura Stoler *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1995), 191.

preserve a bourgeois subject threatened by urbanization. With the largest increase in the Japanese population occurring in Los Angeles County between 1920-1930, Japanese immigrants, Strong finds, are moving away from rural districts into larger cities:

*The Japanese problem is not only essentially a California problem but it is becoming more and more a Los Angeles problem....*This trend from rural to urban districts is not peculiar to the Japanese. During the last decade there has been an increase of 78 per cent of the total urban population of California....This urbanization is even more strikingly indicated by an 88% increase of population in California cities of 100,000 or more....(JC, 223).

By appending the “problem” of Japanese racial difference to the problem of modern urban space, Strong enacts a conflation between the human nature that educator's seek to guide and the threat of urbanization to the external environment so that by solving the problem of race, scientists might likewise solve the geopolitical problem of regional urban development. Anxious about how to identify the individual citizen out of a mass of urban laborers, Strong frames the salvation of racial identity as one strategy to contain and preserve the citizen. He therefore argues for increased social control or “guidance” within educational institutions, citing the need for modern forms of social engineering called “vocational guidance” because “[s]ociety is so complex and changes so rapidly....The second-generation Japanese, like all other second-generation immigrants, need guidance” just as “whites, too need guidance regarding personal affairs, educational programs, and vocational choice which are only different phases of the one great problem of adjustment to environment” (JC, 367-368). Strong begins to construct an ethnic captivity narrative that functions to preserve the spirit of democratic freedom: the entrapment of Japanese American students in urban Los Angeles is a model of the problems that face the larger population regarding the capitalist intensification of space.

“From Weber's social scientific perspective,” Chow writes, “ethnicity appears to be a category with mythic potential (since it is a kind of narrative of belonging)” (PE, 25). What is held captive within ethnicity according to Chow is the status of humanity and human rights, “the human is what has to be redeemed and reaffirmed through a process of struggle against the evil forces from within”(PE, 32). Chow argues that ethnicity can be read as a captivity narrative that maps the trajectory from protest to liberation (PE, 23). Similarly, education according to Strong teaches immigrants and laborers to choose differently in order to liberate themselves: “The Japanese are less definite in their choices and less sure of those choices than whites ”in their choice of vocation while “whites exhibit a wider range of choice and more second choices” (JC, 365,337). Second-generation Japanese children impeded by race are in need of even more guidance than their white counterparts. For Chow as well as for Strong, the liberation of ethnic identity reinforces the Enlightenment values of democracy and freedom.

From the outset of *Vocational Aptitudes*, Strong warns that while even with the use of the most recent Stanford Revision of the Binet Scale, there are “some measurements of certain other factors for which there are as yet no psychological tests,” implying that because these current tests reveal Japanese Americans and white Americans to be “so nearly alike,” racial difference remains in some sense unmeasurable.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, Strong finds that vocational testing establish an undesirable correlation between Japanese Americans and the laboring poor for example in

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<sup>135</sup> Edward K. Strong, *Vocational Aptitudes of Second-Generation Japanese in the United States* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1933), 8, 38. Further references to *Vocational Aptitudes* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *VA*.

Malcolm A. Campbell's use of the Seashore Motor Skills test and the Miles Reaction Board tests; the Seashore study is based on Jantzen mill workers (*VA*, 17). While the Japanese American is shown by Campbell's study as "clearly superior" to whites when it comes to motor skill, Campbell dismisses any correlation between general motor ability and skilled labor. For its purpose in gauging the laboring class's efficiency, the test is rejected by Strong who is more interested in assimilating Japanese Americans into a middle-class democratic ideal that is being threatened in California by a growing migrant labor force.

Strong therefore devises his own set of tests, intended to measure Japanese American artistic ability through an arrangement with Dr. Elizabeth L. Woods, director of the Psychology and Education Research Division of the Los Angeles City School District. As Strong states, "The combined results for all the tests show the Japanese to be very slightly above the norm....The older pupils had a comparatively high interest in art, as shown by a knowledge of the technical terms involved in art work. They also gave evidence of possessing a considerable fund of originality" (*VA*, 80). The students' artistic ability is further imagined to be part of a Japanese racial sensibility that instills in Japanese American students an exceptional moral capability that sets them above other minorities: "the Negro and Japanese have nearly the same enrollment but Negroes have 18 times as many investigations charged against them as do Japanese....it appears that 22 times as many investigations are made concerning Mexican children as concerning Japanese children" (*VA*, 160). Implied within this moral hierarchy is the assumption that aesthetic sensibility is a reflection of moral character, just as John Dewey relates "art" and "education" in his formulation of ideal citizenship. Strong's work on the second-generation Japanese illustrates the central role that racial ethnic minorities played in facilitating the social scientific correlation between art and the act of self-fashioning that articulates a different model of citizenship from the prior Jeffersonian model of agrarian land ownership:

Japanese traditionally are credited with having a keen sense of proportion. Beauty, as exemplified in interior decoration, landscape gardening, and flower arrangement, has been highly developed by Oriental peoples, particularly by the Japanese. Their conspicuous success on the test for recognition of proportion agrees closely with that ability which must be necessary to produce the artistic forms which the art critics of the Western World praise so highly (*VA*, 56).

Strong poses this Japanese instinct for beauty as an antidote to modern alienation, their "inventiveness" and originality contrast with the "imagination of the unselected group [white Americans]" which "becomes deadened as they grow older" (*VA*, 60, 79). This alarming prophecy is softened somewhat by the assurance that "Japanese children" have an artistic "ability [that may] be part of their natural inheritance" (*VA*, 58). Strong's interest in Japanese American artistic ability as a "natural inheritance" applies popular Progressive education discourse to the regional assimilation of the Japanese population in California.

Known as one of the founders of the Progressive education movement, Dewey asserts that art and the imagination are essential to modern democracy. Emphasizing the fantasy of autonomy without real agency, Dewey's work on education theory functions as a corrective to the "institutional life of mankind [that] is marked by disorganization"; the individual's aesthetic sensibility replaces the institution as the agency first proposed in *Democracy and Education* (1916). In Dewey's later work, developed out of lectures that he gave at Harvard in 1932, the opposition between body and world turns on aesthetics and the phenomenological primacy of individual perception:

Art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature. The intervention of consciousness adds regulation, power selection, and redistribution.<sup>136</sup>

On a phenomenological level, Dewey imagines art essentially establishing an ecological relationship between man and world, one that allows the individual basically to “restore” life as a self-reflexive action. Ultimately, for Dewey as well as for Strong, the tension between universal and particular, institution and individual, is managed by the individual’s inclusion in the “the republic of art,” an imagined space of political praxis where the subject is created as an aesthetic turn or trope, “to perceive, a beholder must *create* his own experience.”<sup>137</sup> The imagination in Dewey’s analysis is thus the motor of self-discipline, as he states, “consciousness adds regulation”; likewise, in my analysis of Strong’s work, the Japanese American schoolboy represents the self-regulation required of democratic citizenship through a self-reflexive process of creative “choice.” Japanese Americans represent a human nature that is preserved precisely because it is held captive within the difference of race, a difference that symbolizes the human ability to choose differently; the Japanese American is both doing art as well as undergoing the artifice of democracy.

The trajectory of Japanese American liberation through the preservation of a bourgeois aesthetic sensibility functions to virtually remap the imagined relationship between the individual and the nation-state. I argue that the model minority must be examined as it emerges in conjunction with the preservationist turn in democratic ideology where the injunction placed on Japanese American schoolchildren is not to “assimilate” so much as it is to embody ethnic identity as a space of difference preserved from the capitalist destruction of the human capacity to imagine freedom. If we address the preservation of ethnic difference as an essential part of the survival of liberal democracy in the twentieth century, the central dilemma in model minority discourse is significantly refigured. It seems that, rather than imagining assimilation as the loss of ethnic identification, one must begin to imagine assimilation as the very mode of ethnic identification made available to “legitimate” subjects of the state. Strong’s interest in Japanese American artistic ability dramatizes the role of the racialized citizen as an aesthetic trope of this new liberal democracy where citizenship is no longer bound to agrarian land ownership and instead becomes more intimately aligned with possessive individualism.

Strong’s concern for proper vocation addresses the question of whether or not Japanese American creativity will find its meaningful expression in labor. In E.G. Mears’s study, *Resident Orientals on the American Pacific Coast: Their Legal and Economic Status* (1928), Mears claims,

The greatest handicap of the Oriental in America is the absence of any worthwhile direction or information regarding vocational opportunities....They drift from calling to calling, from locality to locality, with little sense of how their particular talents or handicaps can be utilized to the best advantage.”<sup>138</sup>

Behind the question of Japanese American vocation is the lingering fear that without proper education, the student will fall back into identification with a rising class of exploited migrant

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<sup>136</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigree Books, 1980), 25.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>138</sup> Edward K. Strong, *The Second-Generation Japanese Problem* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1934), 15.

laborers. In Strong's fascination with the ethnic's imagination, one can begin to see the central role that Japanese American schoolchildren hold in revising the concept of citizenship as well as that of political action, turning the transformative relationship between subject and world into the self-reflexive and proleptic action of taking oneself as object in a tautological narrative of freedom. A consummate inversion of Georg Lukacs's assertion that the proletariat is the only class capable of achieving consciousness of its alienation, Progressive educators' liberal democratic staging of liberation suggests that bourgeois aesthetic sensibility is what liberates workers and minorities. Through the figure of Japanese American captivity, Strong conjures bourgeois sensibility as the objective instinct for democratic self-making; the social scientific inauguration of the Japanese American model minority illustrates how the Japanese American serves to materialize a form of knowledge and education necessary to bind in unity the bourgeois subject and the laboring poor through a trajectory of ethnic captivity and liberation.

This kind of use of Japanese racial identity as an object of social scientific inquiry only intensified with the internment of people of Japanese ancestry during World War II; here, the correlation between social scientific analysis and the aims of the state in reforming Japanese American citizens is made more explicit. I will address this issue in greater depth in Chapter Three. For now, I emphasize that racialized populations, as a form of identification that is understood dominantly in terms of group identification, embody the very mode of knowledge of biopower—the death of Man in his specificity. Strong suggests that the survival of American democracy depends on Japanese American assimilation into the dominant population, as I will explore in the following section, as a natural symbol of democratic freedom much like Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes's use of “primeval wilderness” spaces in the West during the New Deal to manage the population's growing unrest.

### **The Crisis of Liberal Democracy and Japanese American Middle-ness**

Japanese American cultural production has often been criticized for its bad form—bad accomodationist politics and bad grammar—and Mori himself did not manage to escape such criticism of his work. It is interesting that many of his sketches tend to embrace and even champion characters that display bad form, either through lack of professional training in the arts, resistance to the stereotype of the ethnic middleman, or rejection of formal citizenship as the solution to social inequality. In *Yokohama, California*, the narrators are usually implicitly second-generation Japanese American citizens who portray mostly first-generation Japanese who were deemed by the government to be “aliens ineligible for citizenship.” Yet the inheritance of economic and social inequality problematizes any attempt at making a clear distinction between Japanese American citizens and Japanese noncitizens. Rather than nationalistically champion the eventual access to citizenship gained by the second generation, *Yokohama, California* and *The Chauvinist* preserve and re-inscribe the energies of ethnic alienation in the first generation to suggest that citizenship and education provide an incomplete liberation. Dilettantism emerges in the first generation and continues into the second generation as fall out experiences that portray the Nisei artist's unused productive potential that remains undisciplined in minoritized subjects. *The Chauvinist* explicitly takes up the theme of artistic development with the first five stories categorized under the subsection, “Callings Near and Far.” Under this subsection, the story that follows “The Distant Call of Deer,” is titled “Japanese Hamlet,” and it is here that the dilettante figure emerges in the context of Nisei education.

Like the sympathetic narrator in “The Distant Call of Deer,” the narrator in “Japanese Hamlet” insists that, “there was little for me to do in the evenings so when Tom Fukunaga came

over I was ready to help out almost any time” (*TC*, 39). It is this initial gap in the narrator’s “occupation” that frees up his own energies to help Tom, thus establishing his identification with Tom, the aspiring Shakespearean actor. Tom faces pressure from his family to give up his artistic ambition in order to legitimize himself in the ethnic economy. Working as a “schoolboy in a Piedmont home,” Tom’s vocation suggests the repetition of the first generation occupations available to the second generation.<sup>139</sup> Yet while Satoshima is contented with amateur hours and displays an “utter lack of ambition to become professional,” Tom aspires to become a professional Shakespearean actor, and therefore eschews his social segregation and dreams of assimilating into mainstream culture (*TC*, 36). Tom’s Uncle Bill insists that he must give up his artistic aspirations and “earn a man’s salary”; Uncle Bill interprets Tom’s refusal to assimilate into the ethnic economy as resulting in his inability to fully develop into a “man” (*TC*, 39). In so far as Tom obeys the dominant stereotype of Japanese American “rugged individualism,” he will have the status of a proper national and ethnic subject (the Japanese “schoolboy” or “nursureyman”). The narrator points out to Tom that Uncle Bill no longer bothers to see him anymore, while Tom reassures him of his choice; the narrator reveals, “I could not get over worrying about Tom Fukunaga’s chances. Every time he came over I felt bad for he was wasting his life and for the fact that I was mixed in it” (*TC*, 41). Finally, the narrator breaks with Tom because he confesses, “I got so I could not stand his coming to the house” (*TC*, 41). The narrator’s anxiety over Tom’s failure as if it were his own reveals Tom’s desire as a projection of the narrator’s fears surrounding his own implied lack of “occupation.” This doubling and opposition of identity between Tom and the narrator reflects a significant conflict between the artist’s freedom to develop innate natural talents and the petit bourgeois demand for productivity. In other words, the Nisei remain dilettantes because they continue to be culturally and economically cast as ethnic middleman minorities; the narrator’s final thoughts sound a foreboding echo of the previous generation: “I knew he would never abandon his ambition. I was equally sure that Tom would never rank with the great Shakespearean actors, but I could not forget his simple persistence” (*TC*, 41). Here individual productive potential or human capital is not enough on its own and is recognized to be defined by unequal access to the institutions of cultural production.

The tension between individual development and participation in a racialized class drawn in “Japanese Hamlet” suggests that citizenship alone does not guarantee liberation for Japanese ethnic minorities. The following sketch continues to re-appropriate failure for its own productive force, its symbolic corruption of the Progressive educational paradigm that aligns educational development with liberal democratic freedom. A sketch titled “Confessions of an Unknown Writer” that follows “Japanese Hamlet” is a self-portrait in which Mori confesses to dreams of one day being published in East Coast magazines like *Story*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Scribner’s*. In “Confessions” Mori takes on Tom Fukunaga’s dilemma, the duality between democratic-aesthetic freedom and liberal economics as a paradox within his own compromised identity; Mori describes himself as a “half-writer and a half-nurseryman.” As I have argued, Japanese American economic assimilation produces an ethnic identity that successfully embodies both

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<sup>139</sup> Nobuya Tsuchida describes the designation of “schoolboy” as describing “a young immigrant who attended school while working as a domestic, receiving room and board in addition to a small salary” (“Japanese Gardeners in Southern California, 1900-1941” in *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism: Asian Workers in the United States Before World War II*, ed. Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984], 438).

nationalist and capitalist universal values. So for the Nisei, the projected image of the economic middleman is an exceptionally positive one. Against these Enlightenment-capitalist values, Mori illustrate that aesthetic education in the Japanese American leads to stasis rather than liberation (as Strong and Dewey argue), to being stuck in the “middle” between liberal individual and free artist. For Mori, his status as an artist conflicts with his occupation and takes him outside of the cycle of biopowerful production. While biopolitics promotes the subject’s faith in the productive force of life itself in order to facilitate economic production, Mori describes his own leap of faith into the life of an artist as one riddle with negation, which brings into relief an essential and insoluble opposition between the businessman and the artist: “I couldn’t be a writer and I was one” (*TC*, 46). What “Confessions” suggests is that rather than being liberated through aesthetic education, the Japanese American continues to function as a middleman minority; Mori’s middle-ness sutures together the opposing aims of liberal freedom and democratic equality and causes him to internalize this opposition as an internal stasis.

Yet obeying his calling as a writer provides access to human capital, to the individual’s creative potential that remains undisciplined by the ethnic economy:

It is this capability of man which is so natural to occur that I am taking myself as the story and firmly believe its worth. I believe in this capability of man; thus, a saint is no different from a dissipater; a prophet no wiser than a disbeliever; a capitalist and a laborer are pals; a diplomat and a soldier are brothers... a producer and a consumer are the union; a citizen and an alien make the flag of man” (*TC*, 49).

The universal nature available within the artist’s vision creates unity out of binary opposition—the saint and the dissipater, the capitalist and the laborer, the first generation “alien” and the second generation “citizen.” Here Mori imaginatively sublates himself into pure narrativity, “taking myself as the story”; completely identified with the repressed aesthetic voice that the ethnic economy disavows, he ironically finds freedom in an essential “capability” of the self, which Hannah Arendt has theorized as the essence of democracy. For Arendt democracy depends on the freedom of the individual to choose anew and thereby give birth to oneself.<sup>140</sup> Nancy Rutenberg suggests that a radical democratic spirit is represented as a narrative voice that remains dispersed and unstable and undisciplined opposed to the normalizing relations established through contractual democracy.<sup>141</sup> In the “story” of himself, Mori explains that he is outcast from formal democracy, from “friends who came out of the school in the same year or later” and “have become substantial citizens in their community” (*TC*, 47). The term “substantial” implies the convergence of political and economic liberalism – his classmates as “substantial citizens” also have the financial means to “set up a home” and thereby find independence (*TC*, 47). This opposition between democratic artistic personality and citizen significantly refigures the popular Progressive ideals that harness together the energies of art, democracy, and citizenship in New Deal programs such as the Federal Writers’ Project. Outside the formal freedoms of citizenship, Mori posits a radical democratic aesthetic ability to “believe” in his own capabilities that remain unrecognized and at the same time undisciplined. Belief counterposes the empty formalism of citizenship and structural economic assimilation with the content of a radical democratic agency.

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<sup>140</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958).

<sup>141</sup> Nancy Rutenberg, *The Democratic Personality: Popular Voice and the Trial of Democratic Authorship* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1998).



This opposition between aesthetic agency and economic identity is also evident in “Japanese Hamlet,” which posits the Enlightenment values of universal reason, individuality, and development as part of a capitalist diction: Tom rejects being a “businessman” and therefore forfeits his right to be a “man.” Yet David Palumbo-Liu interprets “Japanese Hamlet” as an example of minority culture’s compulsion to assimilate into the condition of universalism characterized by dominant culture. In “Universalisms and Minority Culture,” Palumbo-Liu asserts that Tom is both compelled to assimilate into the dominant universal culture and abjected by his failure to do so:

to be Hamlet, Tom cannot be Japanese; to be Japanese, Tom cannot be Hamlet. Yet the myth of universal art denies that there is any contradiction since, in being an artist, Tom can do both. In a similar manner, while Tom is marked racially as Asian, the fact that he is Japanese American likewise would seem to offer him admittance into the dominant culture, since by being American his race is no longer thought to be a prohibitive factor. Yet the text presents us with the frustration of this attempt. Rather than the fulfillment of the Universal's, and America's, premises, we see instead a quiet retreat from the quest.<sup>142</sup>

For Palumbo-Liu, assimilation into the universal rights of citizenship, “the fulfillment of the Universal’s, and America’s, premises,” is a “self-destructive act” for Tom.<sup>143</sup> He further criticizes the other characters in the story for their inability to name race as the “reason” behind Tom’s failure, arguing that the narrator and Tom’s family “cannot bring themselves to voice...in even its tamest form” that “You’ll never be a great Shakespearean actor because you’re a Japanese in America.”<sup>144</sup>

While Tom attempts to achieve assimilation into the dominant culture, it is significant that this is indeed possible through his economic assimilation into the petit bourgeois economy where he might acquire something like an economic universalism. The story’s reference to the avuncular figure “Uncle Bill,” implies both the refusal of the state, “Uncle Sam,” that wants him to be economically productive in his place, and his refusal to replicate in himself an “Uncle Tom” by following the path of the ethnic middleman. Rather than focusing on race itself as the cause of inequality, Mori brings attention to the economic conditions that produce race, to rephrase Palumbo-Liu, “You’ll never be a great Shakespearean actor because you’re an economic middleman.” What I am suggesting is that “Japanese Hamlet” and “Confessions” call attention to the opposition between liberal economic and cultural democratic universalism, an opposition that the middleman minority mediates and as the stories suggest, by privatizing this tension as an internal conflict. In both sketches, the solution to this opposition is the re-appropriation of the individual’s productive capacity or human capital in the form of a radical racial democratic spirit, the “Japanese Hamlet” who desires to direct his own human capabilities.

Palumbo-Liu’s reading of Japanese American assimilation accords with Chow’s and Kim’s formulation—Kim describes Japanese American acquiescence as form of self-negation, and Chow argues that the commodification of racial ethnic difference results in abjection or “coercive mimeticism.” Taken from Albert Memmi, the concept of “coercive mimeticism” is according to Chow,

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<sup>142</sup> David Palumbo-Liu, “Universalisms and Minority Culture,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (1995): 195-196.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

a process (identitarian, existential, cultural, or textual) in which those who are marginal to mainstream Western culture are expected, by way of what Albert Memmi calls 'the mark of the plural,' to resemble and replicate the very banal preconceptions that have been appended to them, a process in which they are expected to objectify themselves in accordance with the already seen and thus to authenticate the familiar imaginings of them as ethnics....[I]t is thus, arguably the very mechanism that holds together the fabric of this particular captivity narrative (*PE*, 107)

Following a postcolonial theoretical model, Chow argues that coercive mimeticism results in the literary production of “ethnic abjection” where “a pattern of thwarted narcissism” is “perpetuated precisely through the act of writing, in such a manner as to turn one's relation to the self into self-hatred- into just another round of internalization of the exclusion it experiences from society at large” (*PE*, 143). Chow applies this model to Japanese American poet, Garret Hongo: “While other Japanese Americans choose to silence themselves, for Hongo, ethnicity is a kind of defiled history that demands articulation,” which is to say that ethnic literature is doomed to express the repressed “defiled history” of “self-hatred” (*PE*, 143). Critics Sau-ling Wong, Palumbo-Liu, and Kim agree that Mori relies heavily on metaphysical and universalist representations of daily life in order to avoid an explicitly political content, that Mori must efface or “silence” the particularity of his ethnic identification in order to assimilate into and “authenticate” the banal racial stereotype of the Nisei as the “Quiet American.” I argue that neither silencing himself nor revealing the defiled history of the ethnic self, Mori’s portraits in *Yokohama California* and *The Chauvinist* reveal internal conflict as the projection of an external exploitative formal structure, the biopolitical management of minoritized populations. These texts question the very privileging of the liberal citizen self in ethnic narratives and present an undertheorized critique of the state that depends on a racialized class of entrepreneurs to articulate a naturalized conception of power; the Progressive tendency to collapse the distinction between ethnicity and the natural environment as ethnic cultures of nature illustrates how a regionalist discourse functions to organize both populations and the environment for the art of government. The ethnic entrepreneur or middleman is essential to this biopolitical circuit of life for production and production for life in the sense that as a form of productivity that idealizes citizenship for its self-productive potential, Japanese American ethnic entrepreneurship at the same time idealizes the liberal capitalist life for production. Mori’s work illustrates how this circuit is in fact an opposition that is managed by the Japanese regional ethnic who internalizes these external forces as an private struggle with stasis or what I call middle-ness, which helps to ideologically manage what was a crisis of liberal democracy during the Great Depression. In order to understand the particular role that Japanese Americans play in the global crisis of liberal democracy, it is necessary to analyze the particular strategy adopted by the U.S. that Hardt and Negri call “network power.”

Progressivism and the New Deal participated in the preservation of liberal democracy through both the scientific management of resources and the formal establishment of the welfare state. According to Hardt and Negri, this is the result of a threatened liberal democracy reinventing itself, which is necessary because, as historian Eric Hobsbawm notes, beginning in the late-nineteenth century and culminating in the inter-war years, there was a global “retreat”

from liberalism compelled by “the accelerating transformation of societies by capitalism.”<sup>145</sup> In many instances, “[f]aced with insoluble economic problems and/or an increasingly revolutionary working class, the bourgeoisie now had to fall back on force and coercion, that is to say, on something like fascism.”<sup>146</sup> Hobsbawm explains that liberal democracy is vulnerable in times of economic crisis because “its characteristic form of government, representative democracy” depends to a large extent on the prosperity and well being of the people, and what he calls “the Age of Catastrophe rarely guaranteed the conditions that made it viable, let alone effective.”<sup>147</sup> Yet while governments in Austria, Germany, Italy, Japan, Portugal, and Spain fell into fascistic regimes, the United States, Hobsbawm asserts, remained unthreatened.

In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri attempt to explain how and why the U.S. managed to preserve liberal democracy in this age of crisis, attributing success to the uniqueness of the Machiavellian Constitution of the United States; they explain that “[t]he Constitution was designed to resist any cyclical decline into corruption by activating the entire multitude and organizing its constituent capacity into networks of organized counterpowers, in flows of diverse and equalized functions, and in a process of dynamic and expansive self-regulation” (*E*, 164). These “networks” of power are further defined by inclusion and expansion. Hardt and Negri distinguish the two historic reform movements, Progressivism and the New Deal, as consecutive phases of U.S. Constitutional government. The central dilemma of the Progressive era is the spatial limit that is created with the closure of the American frontier; this poses a particular challenge for modern sovereignty because open space could no longer be utilized to resolve class conflict. In response, Theodore Roosevelt enforced imperialist expansionism that yet claimed to “include” its colonial subjects, while Woodrow Wilson sought to globalize the U.S. constitutional network through his proposed League of Nations (*E*, 160-182). Although seemingly contradictory, the main thrust within progressive reform measures such as anti-trust legislation and the regulation of the railroads was to preserve constitutional power both by assuaging class tension (inclusion) and by opening up new terrain (expansion).

Progressivism differs from the New Deal reform movement in that, according to Hardt and Negri, the New Deal was an ideological reaction to the competing form of sovereignty that emerged after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. While Progressivism attempts to preserve constitutional democracy by restraining capitalism, Hardt and Negri assert “the New Deal constituted a real departure,” namely in its attempt to preserve liberal democracy by transforming capitalism to make it competitive with communism:

Coming out of the Soviet Revolution of 1917 and the first great imperialist war, capitalist development, it was clear, could not proceed as before. There was, as we have said, a clear choice: either world communist revolution or the transformation of capitalist imperialism toward Empire. Capitalism had to respond to this challenge, but conditions throughout the world were not very favorable. In the 1920s the disorder of capitalist development in the imperialist countries had reached its peak” (*E*, 240).

What is important to note in Hardt and Negri's relation of Progressivism to the New Deal is the assertion that the reform movements together resulted in a significant and unique transformation

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<sup>145</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (London: Vintage, 1996), 119.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

within liberal democracy that was specific to the United States, “[o]nly in the United States was capitalist reform put into effect and proposed as a democratic New Deal” (*E*, 241). This exceptional status is what results in the ascendancy of American Empire after World War II—the term Empire is defined by Hardt and Negri as the development of “the highest form of *disciplinary government*” in which both capital and the state become ruled by the same values, namely the value of production: “[d]isciplinarity is at once a form of production and a form of government such that disciplinary production and disciplinary society tend to coincide completely” (*E*, 142,143). I argue that Japanese American regional literature brings into relief how ethnic assimilation into the territoriality of the state participated in mediating the tension between inclusion and expansion—being excluded as they were from agrarian land ownership so that Progressives could expand access internally to natural resources, while the population was included in Progressive institution building.

Nisei regional literature examines the processes of inclusion and expansion as an environmental dynamic, which is significant given the New Deal state’s complex discourse of nature that established conservation and preservation precedents within California’s regional geography; expansion in California takes on the form of land reclamation projects that benefit large corporations and conflict with the democratic inclusion of the population in welfare state programs, and the population’s inclusion is fostered through increased access to collective commons in the form of national parks. What I am suggesting is that a dual and conflicting ideology of nature as externalizable and yet internal both enables the perpetual spatial expansion of power and is made manifest in the ethnic subject’s dual location relative to the nation-state. It is this regionalist critique of the nation-state that remains overlooked in Japanese American literature. Mori’s work and Nisei regional literature more broadly construct cognitive maps that attempt to reframe the form of relation between the ethnic and the environment; moreover, these regionalist texts re-map the geopolitical formation of the Japanese American community, its relationship to physical geographies as well as to an abstract terrain of power that is being prescriptively produced through the objectification of racialized knowledge and forms of regional inhabitation.

Much more than reflecting ethnic abjection, Mori’s “silences” are filled with a spatial and geopolitical critique of the state, which into relief the biopolitical management of space itself in New Deal California. The Japanese petit bourgeois class relation defines a geopolitical region that inscribes nature, both universal and external, as petty productive property; this is evident in Mori’s stories “The Six Rows of Pompons” and “Business at Eleven.” In the former story, the taming of nature occurs in tandem with the uncles’ taming of their nephew’s wild nature. Threatened by this nephew’s raucous behavior, “everything he did was the opposite of adult conduct, unknowingly destructive and disturbing,” Uncle Hiroshi decides to “take him in our hands” and gives the boy six rows of pompons to tend; he tells Tatsuo, “You own these six rows. You take care of them. Make them grow and flower like your uncles” (*YC*, 141). Learning to tend his garden, although poorly, the nephew likewise learns to cultivate his character. When he has successfully grown “healthy, carefully cultured pompons,” the uncle sells them at the market for a quarter and gives it to Tatsuo in order to give him “a taste of his money” (*YC*, 145,146). Tatsuo’s sensuous binding with money as if it were food for life that he could “taste” suggests how his vocation as a nurseryman disciplines his body, teaching him to commodify nature as a vocation, “his unfinished work in this world” (*YC*, 147). Mori constructs a powerful analogy between the cultivation and commodification of nature at the nursery and the taming of

the “ ‘wild animal’ ” within Tatsuo’s human nature; both acts are described as the “healthy” choice.

In the following story, “Business at Eleven,” a child is forced to grown up fast, becoming a “salesman” for his own business at the age of eleven to keep his family out of poverty. Johnny appears at Mori’s home one day with a business proposition to purchase the aspiring writer’s old magazines like *Scribner’s*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Collier’s* that are accumulating in his basement, which the boy wants to resell. Johnny is the most enmeshed in his petty bourgeois identity and achieves the most “universal” status. Known only by his first name, Johnny’s physical features are defined by his occupation and not his race. In the narrator’s two descriptions of Johnny—“An eleven-year-old boy – I watched him go out with his short business-like stride,” and “I saw the last of him walking like a good businessman, walking briskly, energetically, purposefully”—Johnny’s identification with his vocation disciplines his body so that a business work ethic is utterly identical with the energy and purpose of life itself (*YC*, 151, 154). Unlike Johnny, Mori is a struggling unknown writer who lacks the cultural currency of his peers, whose writings Johnny is profiting from. Johnny tells Mori that “sometimes...people will pay unbelievable prices for copies they have missed or wanted very much to see...their favorite writers’ stories” (*YC*, 149). Creating a new resource out of old magazines, Johnny is praised by Mori, who tells him, “You have found a new way to make money” (*YC*, 151). The boy’s willingness to turn cultural products into renewed resources for profit is reiterated on the level of his bodily representation as a being nothing but a businessman.

In contrast to these stories of commodified spaces of nature, stories like “The Trees” and “Abalone, Abalone, Abalone” reflect spaces of nature that remain uncommodified. In “The Trees,” which appears in the volume just before “The Six Rows of Pompons,” a man visits his neighbor in order to view his Ikebana garden. This neighbor, named Fukushima, declares that he wishes to see Hashimoto’s pine trees in order to gain access to the salubrious properties of nature. After walking a moment through the garden, Fukushima declares, “ ‘I want you to tell me how you really see those pine trees...Please tell me your secret of happiness’ ” (*YC*, 137). As it turns out, Fukushima is downhearted because he has lost all of his stocks and properties and he turns to these trees as the only resource left to him (*YC*, 138). Yet for Hashimoto, the “secret” of the trees cannot be translated or transferred. “I cannot explain the trees,” Hashimoto explains, “ ‘and the secret you mention is the most exposed of all’ ” (*YC*, 137,138). In other words, the value in Hashimoto’s garden cannot be translated for profit. Hashimoto’s insistence on the uselessness of nature, symbolized by the uncommodified fruits of the pine trees, resists both the externalization of nature as an object for consumption and the universalization of nature as a timeless ideal. Rejecting any notion of a secret being embedded within nature when Fukushima asks him, “What do you see in the trees?” Hashimoto replies simply, “ ‘Why, I see the trees’ ” (*YC*, 137). Mori’s representations of a stunningly unproductive nature become even more poignant when contextualized within the New Deal’s conservation and preservation projects in California that were being developed at the time that many of these stories were written. Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior from 1933 to 1946 helped to establish conservation and preservation precedents within California to manage the state’s emergence as one of the nation’s primary agricultural regions. Ickes’s desire to create a national park in the West echoes Fukushima’s desire to find a refuge in primeval wilderness to restore his sense of identity and place after he had “lost all.”

In *The New Deal and the West*, Richard Lowitt argues that Harold Ickes transformed the Californian landscape more than he aided the wage laborer during his tenure. In California

specifically, the New Deal failed to bring significant relief to migrant laborers in the state, noted in the Agriculture Adjustment Act's favoring of large corporations.<sup>148</sup> Workers were on their own to secure their rights so much so that in California there were approximately 180 strikes across 34 counties that involved 100,000 workers in every major crop between 1933 and 1939 (*NDW*, 182-183). Where Lowitt argues the New Deal in California made its most significant impact is in conservation—land reclamation projects and the management of national forest lands. These two initiatives underscore the environmental impact of the New Deal's on the physical geography of California. The national forest system, for example, in its management of the state's water reservoir, both stabilized the population, a key political goal, and aided in the expansion of industry. “[T]he national forests,” Lowitt writes, “containing about 175 million acres of forest and range lands, formed the roof of the West, serving as a giant cistern for the water supply of the region” (*NDW*, 73). Beyond providing water for the population, the construction of Boulder Dam (later renamed Hoover Dam) opened to irrigation 1.5 million acres of land and allowed for the development of hydroelectric power. Conservation ultimately makes the resources of “land, soil, forest, forage, water, and wildlife” more available to augment the state's production of life, and the capitalist life for production (*NDW*, 77,93). Yet Lowitt therefore considers Ickes's conservationist projects a failure for the largest rural wage-earning class in the nation: “Ironically, though the issues were not resolved during the New Deal years, the thrust of the program endorsed by the Department of the Interior presaged assistance to California's large landowners and further consolidated and strengthened their position in the greater interior valleys by assuring them an expanded and continual supply of water for the crops migratory workers picked” (*NDW*, 189).

Through Ickes's interest in preservation, Lowitt argues that despite his failures in labor reform, all is not lost: “[t]here was one notable exception, a new national park, one of two in the West that Ickes was instrumental in creating during the New Deal years” (*NDW*, 189). It is interesting to note that Lowitt posits the “national park” as the “exception” against the “national forest system,” which is to say that the preservation of land, its protection from use as a resource, is an exceptional form of land ownership opposed to the conservationist model illustrated in the national forest system. Ickes's instrumental role in the creation of Kings Canyon National Park illustrates how in California, rather than directly ameliorating the conditions of wage earners, the New Deal falls back on an ideology of nature to enforce the biopolitical management of life. Preservation, defined in the Oxford English Dictionary variously as “protection,” “repair,” and “intactness,” re-establishes a semblance of the state's “counterpower” to capital by designating a region of “nature” and a symbol of life that is inviolable and safe from capitalist use. Supported by the Sierra Club, Ickes's idea for a “primeval” or “primitive wilderness” was opposed by a group that “claimed that power resources would be locked up and another [that] claimed that water for irrigation would be lost” (*NDW*, 190). Lowitt asserts that “Kings Canyon represented the preservationist aspect of Ickes's conservation views in California,” and, I argue that it is through the preservation of nature that the New Deal state fabricated a universal space of exception for its citizens (*NDW*, 191). What the national park preserves is not only a “primitive wilderness” but as Neil Smith suggests, it preserves human nature by providing a place in which one can always return to restore or repair one's “natural” self. It is in this conjunction between

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<sup>148</sup> Richard Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 180. Further references to *New Deal and the West* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *NDW*.

natural space and natural rights that the New Deal most radically transforms citizenship in the sense that the national park, like Japanese American aesthetic ability, is only a symbol of the space of nature in us all – citizenship becomes in this sense socially associated with a universalized possessive individualism.

In *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, Smith argues that what he terms “external nature” (the concept of nature as an external resource), and “universal nature” (the poetic ideal that nature is both external and internal to human experience), can be seen significantly interacting in the concept of a national park:

In our experience of national parks, mountain retreats and weekend vacations in the country, we experience a similar journey from the externality of nature, as experienced in the city, to the universality of nature in which we endeavor to immerse ourselves.... This poetic journey into nature starts off where the scientific journey ends; if the poetic journey begins from the externality of nature which it strives to universalize, the scientific journey accepts the universality of nature- as matter or as space and time-which it strives continually to convert into an external object of labor.... [T]he scientific and poetic experiences are related through the production process, and this is precisely where external and universal nature find common ground.<sup>149</sup>

Smith notes now the state-sponsored preservation of nature creates a cultural norm: the weekend vacation in the woods. Yet, unlike regionalist attempts to represent this universal or poetic nature as a resistance to capitalism’s externalization of nature, Smith insists that universal nature and external nature are part of a single circuit of production. The “common ground” between external and universal nature creates a perpetual circuit of regeneration in which nature is continually (re)produced so that it can continue to be used. This is reminiscent of Hardt and Negri’s definition of the “network” of “counterpowers” in *Empire*, where production serves the aim of life and life serves the aim of production. While the New Deal fails to bring significant institutional changes that benefit labor, the very need for such institutional state reform is replaced by a poetic nationalist ideal of an exceptional state of nature that facilitates the biopolitical enforcement of life. I argue that the New Deal enlists a regionalist production of natural space to produce, preserve, and restore the citizen’s universal human nature while at the same time facilitating the expansion of industrialized farming in California.

Similarly, there are two kinds of nature for Mori’s work, the petty productive property the is externalizable and the realm of nature that remains an epistemological blank; the latter form of nature is associated with the artist’s vocation which is likewise unproductive in both the capitalist and bourgeois cultural sense of the word. In “Abalone, Abalone, Abalone” which appears in the “Callings Near and Far” section of *The Chauvinist*, the narrator like Mori in real life, grows carnations. The nurseryman in the story describes his relationship to an elder carnation grower who collects abalone shells, and like Fukushima, the narrator goes to Mr. Abe’s in order to discover the value of his shell collection: “he did not tell me why he collected these shells. I think I have asked him a dozen times but each time he closed his mouth and refused to answer” (*TC*, 31). One day while replenishing the soil in his greenhouse, the narrator discovers an abalone shell “half buried in the dust,” and this is the beginning of his own career as a collector (*TC*, 32). Although Mr. Abe never reveals the secret of the shells’ value, he gives the narrator this advice: “When you have found the reason why you must collect and preserve them,

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<sup>149</sup> Smith, *Uneven Development*, 14.

you do not have to say anything more” (TC, 32). Mr. Abe claims that the abalone shells cannot be inherited by his children because its significance is only understood by the collector; the shell’s thus represent a form of wealth that remains uncommodified by patrilineal accumulation. The collector for Benjamin represents a dialectical relationship between subject and object; objects ““half buried in dust”” represent emblems or artifacts of the fragmented accumulation of history. Yet unlike Benjamin’s historical ruins, the abalone shell embodies the persistence of natural history alongside the ruins of humankind, and natural history reveals a startling capacity for endurance (as the shells are not fragmented but awesomely whole). This coherence is evident when the narrator polishes the shell, which is like uncovering a priceless work of art: “[T]he more I polished the more luster I found. It had me going. There were colors which I had not seen in the abalone shells before or anywhere else. The different hues, running beserk in all directions, coming together in harmony” (TC, 32). The natural artifact in the form of abalone shells or pine trees evoke a state of Nature that symbolizes an imagined outside of history and the dominant organization of Japanese labor in the middleman economy that falls out of the dominant bourgeois ideology of nature.

In this way, Nisei regional production maps an alternative form of relation to the environment and to a discourse of nature that is being used to naturalize the expansion of liberal democracy between the Progressive and New Deal reform eras. Characters’ alienation from nature functions to ideologically preserve nature from the violence of historical inscription and use, as represented in the above story through the character’s recognition of a difference between human and natural history. In addition, characters’ inability to get inside nature, to use it either for externalization or individual development suggests a realm of productive force that falls out of the liberal democratic intensification and extensification of space. Delineating environments and realms of experience that exist in a sense outside of representation, Mori’s regionalism embraces natural history and a naturalized conception of individual powers and rights as a state of Nature that functions as Spivak suggests to critique the nation-state by imagining an alternative time-space. What I am suggesting is that with the rise of social sciences to disseminate knowledge about human beings with increasing precision and detail, a phenomenon that leads Foucault to assert the death of Man, his fall from the natural and into an entirely historically constructed world, ethnic assimilation functions to establish a counternarrative of humanity’s access to a state of Nature that remains forever outside the circuit of production and outside of the scientific scopic gaze. Rey Chow has argued that ethnic association with a state of Nature enables a narrative of captivity and liberation that couches resistance firmly within the capitalist society. Mori’s sketches reproduce a corrupt form of this narrative, emphasizing how Japanese American citizens remain stuck in the middle-ness of their middleman status. From this static position, nature itself is remapped as a state that resists liberation, and in a sense resists resistance. I theorize Nisei dilettantism as enacting what Hardt and Negri have described as a passive form of resistance to biopolitical control, which is the resistance of refusal founded on the appropriation of energies that fall out of the productive circuit because they are imagined to be utterly useless.

Publishing stories on pre-war life in California after World War II, Hisaye Yamamoto and Wakako Yamauchi pick up Mori’s interest in redefining the paradigmatic relationship between the ethnic and the environment in the progressive context of power. For both Yamamoto and Yamauchi, there is no ethnic refuge in California’s natural landscape; the agrarian environment represents a place of danger in the form of earthquakes, poisonous potatoes, drownings, and labor and sexual exploitation. In Yamamoto’s story set in pre-war California



titled “Seventeen Syllables,” Rosie’s mother, like Mori, lives a double life: one as Tome Hayashi the farmer’s wife, and the other as Ume Hanazono, haiku poetess. Mr. Hayashi, Rosie’s father, is a taciturn man who demands his family’s participation in the harvesting of his tomatoes. Rosie obediently “worked as efficiently as a flawless machine and kept the stalls heaped [with tomatoes]” according to her father’s specification; this description associates agrarian labor with technologized dehumanization.<sup>150</sup> When Mr. Kuroda arrives to present Ume Hanazono with the first place prize in a recent haiku contest sponsored by the Japanese language newspaper, the *Mainichi Shimbun*, Mrs. Hayashi promptly abandons her work to give Mr. Kuroda some refreshments (SS,16). Noting her extended absence from the fields, Mr. Hayashi responds by becoming enraged at his wife’s extravagance, displaying a machine-like violence: “suddenly, her father uttered an incredible noise, exactly like the cork of a bottle popping, and the next Rosie knew, he was stalking angrily towards the house” (SS, 17). Destroying the Hiroshige painting that Ume Hanazono receives as the first place prize, Mr. Hayashi first smashes it with an axe and sets it on fire with kerosene. Again, he is associated with the dehumanized violence of a machine, creating an “explosion” which Rosie imagines is the “cremation” of Ume Hanazono herself (SS, 18). Being a farmer, it seems that Mr. Hayashi should reflect the greatest intimacy with nature, but his relationship to the landscape instills in him a dehumanized capacity for violence. In contrast, Mrs. Hayashi carves out a space of refuge in her non-productive leisure activity, using her free time to compose poetic representations of nature as suggested by her “flowery” pen name. In this gendered division between external nature and universal poetic nature, Yamamoto idealizes the power of a feminized representation of landscapes free from capitalist objectification. This is evident in the way in which the Hiroshige painting reproduces nature: “There were pink clouds, containing some graceful calligraphy, and a sea that was a pale blue except at the edges, containing four sampans with indications of people in them. Pines edged the water and on the far-off beach there was a cluster of thatched huts towered over by pine-dotted mountains of grey and blue. The frame was scalloped and gilt” (SS, 17). In portraying a pre-modern Japanese landscape, the painting illustrates a geographical and temporal escape from the actual alienating natural environment in which Mrs. Hayashi is held captive.

Wakako Yamauchi’s stories about Depression-era California thematize the absence of refuge in nature for Issei men who are employed either as day laborers or rent their own plot on a desertified landscape. In contrast, their cultured female counterparts maintain the capacity to escape alienation by containing and preserving an aestheticized representation of their relationship to nature. In the story titled “Otoko” from her collection of stories *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, Yamauchi strips nature of all idealism as she recalls the hardships that her father faced attempting to farm on borrowed desert land in the Imperial Valley. After losing his job with the American Fruit Growers, he “leased thirty acres,” and “went into farming independently. It was a struggle- too much rain, too little rain, frost. And that was the worst of those years.”<sup>151</sup> With several bad crops, the family is forced to move into a boarding house and her father becomes a day laborer. The men in the boarding house are like her father,

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<sup>150</sup> Hisaye Yamamoto, *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories* (New Jersey: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1998), 16. Further references to *Seventeen Syllables* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically within the text as SS.

<sup>151</sup> Wakako Yamauchi, *Songs My Mother Taught Me: Stories, Plays, and Memoir* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1994), 237. Further references to *Songs My Mother Taught Me* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically within the text as SMT.

men over fifty....who moved with harvests not their own....The older men were scruffy and bowed from years of scraping along on their knees picking strawberries (for tables not their own), and from bending over low grapevines. Their pants were caked with mud. They shook them out at night over the balcony. Conversations were colored with sexual references, and they laughed lewdly at the jokes....Once a man staggered off to the courtyard and passed out on the dirt, the ocean breeze cooling him, the sun warming him like the fruit he's spent his youth harvesting. In the late afternoon he woke and walked away brushing himself off, without shame, as though it were his natural right as a man. Fruit of the land" (*SMT*, 240).

"Otoko" assumes the charge of racialized labor's objectification and consequent identification with the commodified crop. This homology between laborer and land defined by their mutual objectification in the capitalist relation is ironically described as a return to nature and to man's "natural right" to the "fruits of the land." While Yamamoto represents Issei masculine alienation through machine like imagery, Yamauchi relates men's alienated labor as a form of access to nature in so far as both man and nature are equalized as mutual objectified resources. Bent like the "low grapevines" that they pick, the old men's backs reflect how the human body resembles the nature that they participate in commodifying.

In the story "Songs My Mother Taught Me," Sachiko relates her mother Hatsue's cultural aestheticization of nature to her ability to escape total absorption into an unsympathetic natural world. This desire for culture is further objectified in the form of a male interloper, usually a hired laborer, who stands in as a substitute for her husband as a romantic love interest. Sachiko describes how the hired laborer on her family's farm, Mr. Yamada, "was the affirmation of my mother's Japan—the haunting flutes, the cherry blossoms, the poetry, the fatalism" (*SMT*, 35). Yamada-san in many ways embodies characteristics that directly oppose Sachiko's father's total immersion in nature: "Yamada-san was different from my father— handsome and younger. He came to the dinner table in a fresh shirt, his hair combed back with good-smelling oil. My father, like most farmers, wore his hair so short that neither comb nor rain (nor sun) changed its shape. Yamada-san had eyes that looked at you. When you talked he committed himself to you. My father's eyes were squinty from the sun, and he hardly saw or heard you" (*SMT*, 35). In "Songs," the father's alienation is not a result of his distance from nature but rather his assimilation into nature, which results in antisocial tendencies, his "eyes were squinty from the sun, and he hardly saw or heard you." Assimilation into nature also proves detrimental for Hatsue; when Yamada-san is fired by Sachiko's father, it is revealed that Hatsue is pregnant. Forced back into the demands of childbearing, Hatsue's assimilation into nature is described by Sachiko as a violent co-optation of her body: "The baby grew steadily inside my mother's belly, distending and misshaping her body. The black hair she wore in a smooth coil at her neck grew crisp and faded. Broken strands hung from her temples like dry summer grass, and brown splotches appeared on her skin" (*SMT*, 36). Both masculine and feminine associations with nature in "Songs" represent the reduction of bodies into forms of nature that prove to be the antithesis of humane living.

Yet the Issei woman claims an interior space through which to produce a cultured representation of nature, a skill that Issei men utterly lack. Hatsue therefore has a capacity to aesthetically contain her grief within the song that she sings about the "transient moon" (*SMT*, 34). Unlike the Issei man who assumes the charge of his reduction to an externalizable nature, who thereby claims a more prior "natural right" to sleep in the field, the Issei mother in "Songs" attempts to escape nature through her relationship with Yamada-san, a "cultured" Japanese man.

Yamamoto's "Seventeen Syllables" represents a similar capacity in Mrs. Hayashi to contain the grief of her lost love in memorializing her stillborn son, "who would be seventeen now," within the seventeen syllables of the haiku poem. The final realization of this correspondence between the haiku poem and the tragic loss of her son brings new meaning to the "cremation" of the painting by Mr. Hayashi. Like the literal coffin for the son who would be seventeen, the poem for which she won the painting contains the mother's private grief. So that while Mr. Hayashi attempts to disrupt his wife's intentions by burning the painting, he in fact only fulfills the purpose of the poem in memorializing the death of her son through his "cremation." Yamamoto implies that the short story functions to perform a similar kind of containment when Mrs. Hayashi tells the "story" of her past "perfectly, with neither groping for words nor untoward passion. It was as though her mother had memorized it by heart, reciting it to herself so many times over that its nagging vileness had long since gone" (SS, 19). Like Mori's insistence that writing allows him to re-contain the wasted energies of his life, both Yamamoto's and Yamauchi's stories claim authorship as a way to contain and preserve the creative energies of Issei mothers whose humanity is denied in by their roles in the ethnic economy. Yamamoto and Yamauchi provide retrospective representations of the Depression era that unlike Mori's stories rely on the feminine aestheticization of nature to gain access to a poetic universal nature. In contrast for Mori, assimilation into nature resists the poetic impulse to inscribe a transcendental nature, and remains a purely negative space free from capitalist and nationalist ideals. Together Nisei regionalists participate in a discourse of nature to contain energies that fall out of capitalist commodification—a mother's private grief produces poetry, the launderer spouts philosophy, and the houseboy performs Shakespeare. Their approach, which privileges nature as the dominant symbol of human productive potential that escapes power's organizing ability, at the same time participates in the biopolitical logic that compelled the progressive state to utilize a discourse of nature conservation and preservation as the cornerstone of its program to, as Foucault argues, ameliorate life.

Yet the expansion and intensification of environmental control from Progressivism to the New Deal, particularly in California did not happen without significant racialized and labor conflict because those that were the most exploited by the externalization of labor in capitalist production did not have access to the universal nature available in citizenship and in equal access to the welfare state. New Deal reform in large part elides California's agricultural-economic dependence on a mobile migrant labor force, a situation that led Carey McWilliams to name California "the great exception" (which connotes a space very different from Ickes's "primeval" space of nature). McWilliams calls attention to the failure of democracy for the Californian farm laborer: "Farm labor is California's 'peculiar institution' in much the same sense that chattel slavery was the South's peculiar institution. . . . For more than seventy years, a large portion of the state's population has lived in a kind of social 'no man's land,' often disfranchised, consistently unrepresented, and on many occasions, brutally repressed."<sup>152</sup> The spatial analogy that McWilliams draws between California and the South highlights the structural problems within the state's regional economic reliance on a population of racialized cheap migrant labor.

One way in which dominant ideology rationalized this economic region according to Colleen Lye was through the "racial form" of the Japanese farmer; Lye asserts that progressives repeatedly represented Japanese immigrant farmers as causing the state's soil erosion in their attempts to promote land conservation, while Japanese landowners were targeted as the

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<sup>152</sup> Carey McWilliams, *California: The Great Exception* (New York: Current Books, 1949), 150.

embodiments of corporate agriculture. This imagined threat of the Japanese “cheap farmer” helped to manage the ideological crisis evolving around the end of Jeffersonian agrarianism and the rise of corporatized agriculture or “factory farms.” Lye asserts that, conceived in the context of a post-frontier state, conservation movements began in the 1910s to create more arable land, and Japanese farmers were used by progressives to explain the absence of the white American yeoman farmer, an outmoded ideal; as farming in California became corporatized, the Japanese landowner irrationally represented the perceived threat to the yeoman ideal, which resulted in the passage of alien land laws to prohibit Japanese land ownership.<sup>153</sup> Pointing out an overlooked contradiction in the 1913 Alien Land Law, Lye argues that the law actually expresses the progressive values of liberal reformers for soil conservation.

I draw from Lye’s observation, and suggest that in addition to deflecting labor’s animus toward corporatization in California, the stereotype of the Japanese farmer also participates in the New Deal’s environmental discourse that transformed citizenship to fit the demands of the post-frontier age. While the conservationist aspect of the law can be seen through its demand for managed land-use (the externalization of nature), the alien land law’s outright denial of land-use to Japanese immigrants who were ineligible for citizenship implies that the non-use of land by non-citizens would restore an imagined original value within the land (universal nature). By introducing the problem of racial identity into land use in California, liberal reformers dovetailed the aims of capital (externalization of land for profit) into the aims of the state (augmenting nationalist conceptions of universal nature). As Roger Daniels cites, one of the civic organizations behind the exclusion movement, the Native Sons of the Golden West believed that the “only thing that will save California is...a state law that will make it impossible for Japanese to get possession of the soil” (*PP*, 88). What exclusion enables is not only a conservationist management of land use, but ideal possession through a romanticized nativist conception of “virgin land.” What I am suggesting is that the Japanese farmer is a racialized regional figure that sutures together two opposing conceptions of nature that functioned to shape the environmental agenda of progressive politics in California. The purpose in making this distinction between conservationist and preservationist thought is to suggest a consistency within what appears to be an irrational contradiction within the progressive treatment of Japanese racial difference; Frank E. Chuman notes the illogic behind the 1913 Alien Land Law: “The Alien Land Law of 1913 was the first legislation to deprive the Japanese of any substantial property rights. It applied the standards of ‘eligibility to citizenship’ as used by Congress to the entirely different and unrelated area of land ownership. It excluded Japanese from land ownership solely on the basis that they were ineligible for citizenship.”<sup>154</sup> This binding of citizenship and property rights reinforces the Jeffersonian model of citizenship founded specifically on agrarian land ownership. By denying Japanese immigrants access to this path towards citizenship, I argue that the alien land laws participate in the transformation and modernization of citizenship, using the Japanese immigrant as a model for a new type of citizenship that is developed in Progressive and New Deal education discourse. While the alien land laws in 1913 and 1920 enforce a race-based exclusion of Japanese immigrants from access to land as well as citizenship, Progressive education reform in California actively sought to assimilate the state’s minorities; during the wartime New Deal management of the interment camps, Japanese schoolchildren are also

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<sup>153</sup> Lye, *America’s Asia*, 114-115.

<sup>154</sup> Frank F. Chuman, *The Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese-Americans* (Del Mar: Publisher’s Inc., 1976), 50.

analyzed by social scientists as model citizens so that while one door to citizenship is closed, another is opened.<sup>155</sup>

Progressives in California utilized the flexible identification of the Japanese immigrant as both illegitimate subjects whose exclusion reinforced the conservation-preservation of nature for production, and as productive citizens and embodiments of the nation-state's life enforcing function whose management through progressive education preserves national democratic ideals. Although seemingly contradictory, Japanese exclusion and inclusion both function to preserve liberal democracy by articulating the aims of liberalism and democracy as coincident with the expansion of productive agrarian space and the educational inclusion of minorities based on the individual's freedom of choice; this process of expansion and inclusion can be related to the functioning of what Foucault identifies as biopolitics, and more specifically situates racial difference squarely within its seemingly contradictory enforcement of the right to "let die" alongside the imperative to "make live." Citizenship in this instance is transformed through its association with virtual controls, the placing by social scientists of the onus of responsibility for social welfare on personal responsibility given the individual's access to a seemingly limitless fund of internal human natures and capacities made accessible through vocational education; this marks a significant transformation in the Jeffersonian discourse of citizenship that was becoming untenable in the post-frontier age.

### **Conclusion: Ethnic, Oil Fields, Bioregions**

To understand the environmental facets of assimilation in minority discourse entails overcoming the dominant conception in the field that "assimilation" is a betrayal both of oneself and one's community. While some have sought to dislodge the polarization between assimilation and resistance (Tomo Hattori and Viet Thanh Nguyen),<sup>156</sup> I argue that the historic emergence of the Nisei as a model minority in the early-twentieth century suggests that the full relationship between ethnic assimilation and biopolitics has yet to be fully understood. While Japanese American ethnic identity is often linked with post-war multiculturalism, I argue that re-contextualizing model minority discourse in the interwar years brings into relief how the assimilation of the Nisei functioned as a precursor to post-war multiculturalism that participated in the discursive management of a critical transformation in citizenship wrought by the New Deal; with the increasing scarcity of available land, the concept of citizenship moves away from Jeffersonian ideal of land ownership, and as illustrated by the Progressive education movement in California, toward the conjunction of citizenship (nation-state's production of subjects) and "vocation" (capitalist production); citizenship in this way more participates in the virtualization of control that Foucault and Hardt and Negri associate with a new form of power more closely aligned with progressive politics and liberal and neoliberal political economy. Yet, resisting the self-reflexive turn in fiction that Judith Butler has identified as the simultaneous moment of subject formation and state discipline, Mori's stories script ethnic "assimilation" as a stalled

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<sup>155</sup> Progressive education in the interment camps is addressed in Thomas James's *Exile Within: The Schooling of Japanese Americans, 1942-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987).

<sup>156</sup> Tomo Hattori, "Model Minority Discourse and Asian American Jouis-Sense," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (1999): 228-47; Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002).

captivity-liberation narrative.<sup>157</sup> Mori's regional aesthetic allows his stories to explore external environmental factors—the production of identity as it is essentially related to the geopolitical production of regions—that in turn reveal the spatial inconsistencies between democratic and capitalist conceptions production and subject formation.

If, for example, regionalist writers also illustrate “the relevance of global economic restructuring to both the ‘production’ and critique of local, place-based identifications,” as Hsuan Hsu argues, then beyond participating in a nationalist ideology of natural space and citizenship, literary regionalism must also be understood for its participation within the global capitalist system it only appears to escape.<sup>158</sup> The production of California as a unique economic and political region was significantly facilitated by the Japanese community's ethnic identification—through its structural assimilation as regional economic middleman minorities and its political assimilation as racialized citizens with the birth of the second generation. Japanese ethnic identification with place functions in both instances as a resource that facilitates the state's production of “natural” space both for the political preservation of citizenship and for the conservation of capitalism during an era in which liberal democracy faced a global crisis.

While Strong's studies attempt to establish a facile relationship between Japanese American captivity in ethnic difference and their access to a natural democratic aesthetic, more recent sociological studies assert that it is Japanese assimilation into California's economy as a petit bourgeois class that encouraged and strengthened ethnic identification. Ethnic identity politics in this instance can be seen as enabling a discourse of natural rights and liberal individualism that would, in the post-war, become the cornerstone of universal “human rights” also founded on national minorities. Rather than entailing the disavowal of a marginalized identity, Japanese American assimilation requires the presentation of ethnic particularity in order to contain conflicting idealized economic and political identifications that define liberal democracy. Chows analysis of ethnic captivity narratives brings much needed analysis to the process of ethnic assimilation and idealization in biopolitical transactions that define global capitalism: the contemporary commodification of ethnicity traffics in the assumption that ethnic identity contains within it “the essence of humanity” or the redemption of humanity (*PE*, 32). So that ethnicity comes “[i]n its modern usage” to designate “a kind of cultural condition that is descriptive of all human beings,” which I suggest in the following chapter is fundamental to the post-war definition of universal human rights (*PE*, 25).

While Palumbo-Liu has argued that Mori's “universalism” is a result of the racial minority's desire to gain recognition from “dominant culture,” I argue that this kind of criticism overlooks the regionalist aesthetics in Mori's work that brings into relief attempts to re-territorialize universalism from its foundation in liberal ideology, radically re-defining the relationship between race, the environment, and biopolitical production. Natural law as it has been theorized by Jean-Jacques Rousseau is founded on the rational, individual, and masculine national subject; Mori's concern for nature asserts a geological sovereignty in nature that resists its usage either for the purposes of individual subject formation or for capitalist use—nature, in his work remains a symbol of pure uninscribed potential that directly mirrors the productive energies in the Nisei that fall out of dominant disciplinary forms of management. Mori's stories

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<sup>157</sup> Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1997).

<sup>158</sup> Hsuan Hsu, “Literature and Regional Production,” *American Literary History* 17, no.1 (2005), 44.

register the influence of an absent New Deal state in a community that lacks its disciplinary institutions intended to augment education and occupational profession. Because of this access to an imagined outside to biopolitical control, I assert that Nisei regionalism shows how racial ethnic identification need not end as Chow argues, in abjection, in pure negativity.

My argument that racial identification must be examined through environmental analysis invokes the argument that Chow makes in her earlier work, *Ethics After Idealism*, where she compellingly argues that fascism must be understood as an expression of idealism. Focusing on the general phenomenon of projection that makes apparent “the fascist in us all,” Chow asks what it means for this complex process of projection and assimilation to be seen as a general procedure of citizenship. I see a related mechanism in ethnic assimilation in which the ethnic must present herself as a “marked” identity in order to assimilate into the nation; Chow describes fascism as “a search for an idealized self-image through a heartfelt surrender to something higher and more beautiful,” by which she means the violence that fascism enables is itself sustained by “something eminently positive and decent” such as humanistic ideals.<sup>159</sup> Chow’s examination of fascist projection persuasively argues against the common perception that fascism is an out and out “negative force.”<sup>160</sup> Instead of imagining fascism as the violence of a “lack” in us that is projected outward, Chow argues that projection can be seen as functioning from the outside in: “we see that projection, instead of being preceded by ‘being,’ is itself the basis from which ‘being’ arises. What this means is a reversal of Freud’s model of projection.”<sup>161</sup> In other words, fascism is a form of environmental control.

Bringing projection outside onto the “surface” of things allows Chow to assert that it is “a *positing* rather than a negating function.”<sup>162</sup> To situate this argument in the context of ethnic assimilation, one can begin to see assimilation likewise as a response to external environmental controls. If the creation of California as a geographical region is the “positing” or outside “projection” out of which “‘being’ arises,” then one might argue that ethnic identity is the projection of political, economic and social values that shape the region.<sup>163</sup> To revise previous questions regarding Mori’s universalism, I ask, how might we see Japanese American citizenship as representative of a modern process of regional production that projects the highest ideals of the biopolitical state through both the geopolitical exclusion and inclusion of racial otherness? As I hoped to have shown, the duality in Japanese inclusion and exclusion brings into relief a broader duality in the biopolitical conception of nature, which Neil Smith argues is what gives currency to the ongoing spatial expansions in global capitalism. Relating biopower to the expansion of capitalism, Foucault writes, “[B]iopower was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes” (*HS*, 140-141).

In order to understand the vital function that ethnic assimilation plays in this process of

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<sup>159</sup> Rey Chow, *Ethics After Idealism: Theory—Culture—Ethnicity—Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1997), 16-17.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>163</sup> Michael Omi and Howard Winant emphasize this structural element behind ethnic identity in *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

biopolitical expansion of the spatial geography of capitalism, it is important to resist the trend in post-structural analysis to de-spatialize ethnic identity formation. From an identity-politics perspective, the problem of preserving nature is associated with the discriminatory discourse of natural ethnic differentiation. Recent post-structuralist analyses of Asian American identity formation attempt to remove the concept of race from nature by asserting that there is no natural “essence” that unifies Asian American identity. Viet Nguyen uses Judith Butler’s concept of performativity to argue that Asian American identity is, on some level, all an act: “Once Asian Americans take their common racial identity for granted and evacuate it of any substantial political meaning ... Asian American populations will be free to fracture around more concrete political interests.”<sup>164</sup> Kandice Chuh takes this point further by daringly calling for a “subjectless discourse” in order “to create the conceptual space to prioritize difference by foregrounding the discursive constructedness of subjectivity.”<sup>165</sup> Chuh’s analysis of transnational influences in the formation of Asian American literary subjectivity identifies how global relations significantly shape the formation of local Asian American identities. Yet, this assertion leads Chuh to abandon the analytics of space in her assertion that “[t]hese writers help to illuminate the limitations of a territorial imagination that cannot account for the transnational dilemma of nationalized subjectivities.”<sup>166</sup> Whereas Nguyen’s and Chuh’s positions call for the delinking of racial identity with any notion of natural difference, what Chuh terms “strategic anti-essentialism,” I argue that it is also important to understand how and why racial identity continues to be essentialized and associated with a naturalized geographic region.

I argue that it is important to understand assimilation as a dynamic related to the liberal democratic production of space. For Nisei regional literature, identity politics facilitates an exploration of how nature itself is produced through various political and economic mechanisms, to reflect how identity occurs through identification with a regional production and projection of space. Moving away from the mythic conceptions of natural space in the “American Fable,” advocated by Saroyan, the later issues of *Current Life* reveal an increasing understanding of the relationship between ethnic identity and the production of nature in the form of “factories in the fields.” A later issue features an article on Alaskan Cannery workers, and the final two issues contain articles by Carey McWilliams, where he describes role of racial differentiation as a resource that enables the commodification of nature through the regional implementation of exploitative class relationships in California’s agriculture industry.<sup>167</sup> In the final “War” edition, the cover advertises the publication of a story that was never published due to the war titled, “Grass,” by Arturh T. Morimitsu, described as a “moving and poignant story of the Nisei in the asparagus fields of the Sacramento Valley.”<sup>168</sup>

Nisei regionalist cognitive mapping of the environment refigures the trajectory of assimilation, of how the Japanese immigrant community was constituted within and through the state-capitalist domination of the environment. This mapping technique evokes the bioregionalist ordering of space, a technique that originated in the West by environmentalists who insisted on

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<sup>164</sup> Nguyen, *Race and Resistance*, 166.

<sup>165</sup> Candice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2003), 9.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>167</sup> Carey McWilliams, “What is the Immigration Problem in California,” *Current Life*, November 1941, 8-9.

<sup>168</sup> *Current Life*, “War Edition,” Jan. 1942, cover.



the significance of the geographical terrain for both natural and social life. Like literary regionalism, bioregionalism emphasizes the life-enhancing practices of local geographical knowledge.<sup>169</sup> Yet for Nisei regionalists there is no escape from entrenchment within the capitalist domination of nature. This is emphasized in Yamamoto's work, which focuses on the perspective of children who are the most vulnerable to the dangers of industrialized agriculture yet have no capacity of extricating themselves from that environment. In "Yoneko's Earthquake," a young boy dies after spending the day chasing after a potato picking machine and eating raw potatoes, in "Life among the Oil Fields: A Memoir," a boy is run over by a car on his way home from a neighboring farm due the lack of appropriate roads. The latter story is described as a memoir in which Yamamoto recounts her experience of the Great Depression; in the story she claims to be compelled to this recollection due to the current looming economic crisis (SS, 88). The story, written in 1979, creates associations between the 1970s recession and her childhood experience of the year 1929. Implicit in this evocation of the historical repetitiveness of economic crises is the subtext of ongoing environmental crisis. Yamamoto thematizes oil as the related environmental symbol of economic crisis in both eras, and the story itself was written in a period when the Oil Shock and energy shortages compelled environmentalists like Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann to rethink the nation's energy policy by devising a "bioregional" relationship between populations and the local regional environment.<sup>170</sup>

The basis of environmental critique in "Life among the Oil Fields" comes from the story's comparison of agricultural practices to other resource extraction practices, analogized by the location of the Yamamoto family's strawberry farm in an oil field. The oil derricks add an industrialized image to the landscape, whose wooden mechanism mimics the action of her father who plows the field with a single horse: "Constructed of rough lumber, tar-smearred and weathered, they were ungainly prominences on the landscape. They reared skyward in narrow pyramids from corrugated tin huts and raised platforms whose planks accommodated large wooden horse heads nodding deliberately and incessantly to a regular rhythm" (SS, 88). The environment is both mechanized and rough-hewn, a figure of modern dereliction that suggests the degradation of life with the intensification of technological methods for commodifying nature. Yamamoto's mother complains of the primitive conditions of the home in which they live, lacking electricity and plumbing (SS, 88,91). The story brings into relief the absence of a protective net for families living in an industrialized natural landscape reminiscent of the Wild West with omnipresent and invisible danger.

As a child growing up in such an environment, Yamamoto asserts that she and her siblings accepted that the dangers around them were just as "natural" as living through the economic crisis:

As I have said, I cannot recall that the great depression immediately plummeted us into a grimmer existence....Likewise, living alongside derricks and sump holes did not interfere with our daily routine. If we could not ignore their considerable presence, we accepted them, worked and played around them, and made respectful allowances for the peril connected with them. We might venture onto the derrick platforms, but investigations were conducted gingerly to avoid contact

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<sup>169</sup> Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild: Essays* (Emeryville: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2004).

<sup>170</sup> Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann, "Reinhabiting California," *Ecologist* 7, no. 10 (1977): 399-401.

with the pounding pistons and greasy pulleys, except that we sometimes tried to ride the long steel bars that moved back and forth” (SS, 93).

Pigeons get caught in the oil, which the family eats, and the kids fly kites made of rags and newspapers in between the derricks. Then the inevitable accident follows: Yamamoto’s three or four year old brother Little Jemo, playing on the embankment of the derrick, falls into the sump hole while his parents are out farming the fields and his older siblings are away at school. He is unharmed by the incident as his parents were near enough to hear his cries for help. Here the child’s neglect, the lack of supervision that clearly endangers his safety spatially calls into question the environmental dangers presented both by the oil wells and agricultural labor. In a second related accident, the theme of the nation-state’s recklessness is further evoked in a more life threatening accident that Jimo befalls; one day, while utilizing the gravel roads that have been built by the oil company to return home from a neighboring farm, Jemo is struck by a car. Yamamoto recalls her parents’ distress as they are unable bring the perpetrators of the crime to justice.

Through Jemo’s vulnerability to both the hazards of the oil field and the related hazard of the reckless drivers who Yamamoto compares to Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, ethnic assimilation through petit bourgeois practices takes on a precariously untenable quality. The accident makes clear to Yamamoto that racial minorities are considered like the oil and the strawberries that her family grow, a exploitable commodity: “were we Japanese in a category with animals then, to be run over and left beside the road to die?” (SS, 95). “Life among the Oil Fields” constructs a critique of the state that is ignored by both the traditional right and left that mutually focus on the state either as an inefficient welfare apparatus or as a totalitarian behemoth in its reference to the vulnerable populations that fall through the cracks of progressive power. Bioregionalism participates in the latter movement in its emphasis on the destructive practices of a centralized government that manages public lands, as Gary Snyder argues in *The Practice of the Wild*; opposing the state’s insensitivity to “biotic areas and ethnic zones alike,” Snyder and other bioregionalists call for a separation of regions based on geological formations such as watersheds, landforms, and elevations.<sup>171</sup> As a movement that emerges in response to the energy and economic crisis based on the U.S. dependence on foreign oil, bioregionalism outlines a strategy of local regional inhabitation to combat global capitalist networks that create “a cobweb economy where such events as the Arab boycott, natural gas supply problems, and droughts are tugging on the support strands.”<sup>172</sup> Bioregionalism, what Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann call “living-in place,” claims that “smaller, more stable units” are more ecologically sound.<sup>173</sup> Yet in addition to calling for a more environmentally conscious lifestyle, Berg and Dasmann romanticize the effects of nature on human civilization, arguing that a return to nature will make civilization “more human” and “truly civilized,” which involves “becoming fully alive...It involves applying for membership in a biotic community and ceasing to be its exploiters.”<sup>174</sup> Published in 1977, two years before “Life among the Oil Fields,” Berg and Dasmann’s prescription for “Reinhabiting California” participates in the same kinds of idealizations of nature as a life enhancing mechanism that culturally reiterates the imperative of the biopolitical state to “optimize” life. Bioregionalism’s romanticization of the ethnic inhabitation of nature,

<sup>171</sup> Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*, 27-51.

<sup>172</sup> Sam Love, “Redividing North America,” *Ecologist* 7, no. 7 (1977), 318.

<sup>173</sup> Berg and Dasmann, “Reinhabiting California,” 399.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

modeling itself on Native American practices, also on some level reiterates progressive education discourse in the Great Depression, which embraced a cultural pluralist attitude.

While I do not disagree with bioregionalist strategies of local inhabitation and knowledge, I argue that, as Yamamoto's story illustrates, such methods of resistance to capitalist globalization must take into consideration its relationship to the biopolitical production of natural spaces and identities; this entails questioning one's own attitudes and perceptions regarding the natural environment and the place of ethnics within that environment. In bioregionalism, the native is held captive in nature and never considered part of the modern landscape in a manner that resembles the progressive biopolitical management of Japanese immigrant culture as a part of nature. Furthermore, bioregionalist calls for the local management of regional resources overlaps with conservative invectives about big government. Against this liberatarian attitude, Japanese American regionalist literature brings into relief the vulnerability of populations that have been excluded from the state's welfare infrastructure. Parents and local inhabitants alone are not able to combat global structures of power, as Yamamoto claims that her child-self could not fully comprehend the dangers that lurked in the oil fields: "We must have lived day and night to the thumping pulse of black oil being sucked out from deep within the earth. Our ambiance must have been permeated with that pungency, which we must have inhaled at every breath. Yet the skies of our years there come back to me blue and limpid and filled with sunlight" (*SS*, 89). Yamamoto questions the limitations within the individual's perception of the environment, which is filtered through the incomplete vision of a child, and then filtered through the fragmentation of Yamamoto's faltering memory and propensity for nostalgia, and informed "by all that has transpired in between," which gestures toward her environmental consciousness emerging in the wake of more contemporary oil spills and energy issues (*SS*, 95). If bioregionalism were to consider the history of ethnic participation in California's agribusiness, it might reconsider the process of ethnic assimilation into and inhabitation of the natural world that itself has become a commoditized facet of political, economic, and cultural production.

### Chapter Three

#### 'Dead Aliveness': Welfare and Environmental Control in John Okada's *No-No Boy*

Liberalism in America is a whole way of being and thinking....Liberalism must be a general style of thought, analysis, and imagination.

—Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1987-1979*

Although welfare reform is the policy issue that most readily translates into a racial code, other social programs—urban renewal, job training, school choice—elicit similar connotations. Politicians say they are talking about social programs, but people understand that they're really talking about race."

—Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*

The human being who has lost his place in a community, his political status in the struggle of his time, and the legal personality which makes his actions and part of his destiny a consistent whole, is left with those qualities which usually can become articulate only in the sphere of private life and must remain unqualified, mere existence in all matters of public concern.

—Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

John Okada's novel *No-No Boy* (1957) is singular in its depiction of the aftereffects of wartime internment for the Japanese American community. A deeply excavated history, the mass evacuation and imprisonment of approximately 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast during World War II is an event that scholars almost unanimously interpret as a tragedy of democracy; consequently, less attention has been given to the postwar experience of the Japanese and Japanese Americans whose physical communities were irreparably damaged by the evacuation and relocation process. I seek to challenge these dominant prescriptive narratives of the internment that inscribe the event as an historical anomaly or momentary lapse in an otherwise democratically motivated nation-state by examining the novel's depiction of the post-war Japanese community. More specifically, this essay explores *No-No Boy*'s representation of the genealogy and epistemology of space, both the damaged spaces of post-war ethnic ghettoization and the modernizing infrastructure associated with New Deal and Cold War management, which I assert presents an alternative critical method for interpreting the historical past and understanding the contemporary logics of racism. By interlocking pre-war, interment-period, and post-war space, the novel brings into relief an unsettling proximity between the state's carceral and protective spaces. My analysis of *No-No Boy*, inspired by recent criticism on the internment that analyzes this apparent contradiction in the role that New Dealers played in the management of the camps, traces both the rise of increasingly progressive attitudes towards racial difference and the persistence of overtly racist oppression through an engagement with the novel's representation of resemblances between the carceral spaces that overtly imprison people

of Japanese ancestry and progressive spaces of the state intended to liberate the population's potential.<sup>175</sup> What follows is an examination of the implicit and explicit racial dynamics that continue to manage these kinds of disjunctions in the production of space in what David Theo Goldberg calls a racial state.

One of the most significant and yet commonly overlooked formal features in *No-No Boy* is its archeological layering of space—its juxtaposition of fragmented memories of pre-internment spatial histories, with the protagonist Ichiro Yamada's as well as Okada's own memories, which are inserted in the preface to the novel, of the physical structures and geographies of camp and post-camp life. The novel begins with Ichiro's return home after having been incarcerated in camp and imprisoned thereafter for resisting the U.S. draft. "Home" is located in an ethnic ghetto of Seattle, where his parents and brother live crammed into a single room behind a grocery store that his parents own. Upon his return, Ichiro notes that before the war, he would frequent this very same store that was previously owned by another Japanese family. Ichiro also takes note of similar geographical alterations in the landscape upon his return—in his initial appraisal of the town he cognitively maps the old Japantown that is spatially disappearing as it is now transitioning from a Japanese ethnic enclave prior to the war to a predominantly African American ethnic enclave after the war. This layering of old spaces with new ones achieved through Ichiro's point of view is significant because it asserts a spatial context that powerfully opposes the temporally progressive orientation of the novel that is located in the protagonist's quest to liberate himself from various forms of imprisonment—racial identity, class position, and civic scapegoating—and suggests that the material influences structuring the past and that brought about the internment are still very much informing the post-war environment.

Cultural geographers such as Edward Soja and Neil Smith have noted that space remains an underemployed theoretical tool for materialist cultural critique, taking up Henri Lefebvre's earlier insistence that space is one of the weak points of ideology because it must constantly be engaged and transformed in order to facilitate capitalism's perpetual demand for expansion, what Smith defines as uneven development.<sup>176</sup> My engagement with the novelistic representation of uneven development in *No-No Boy* brings into relief how race manages the intersection and disjunction between the democratic idealization of the nation-space on the one hand, and liberal capitalism's degradation of space through the process of uneven development on the other. It therefore builds upon Lisa Lowe's analysis of spatial disjunction as the crux of Asian American cultural critique. In her influential work, Lowe powerfully asserts that the spatial marginalization or segregation of racial minorities reveals the contradiction between the liberal capitalist demand for immigrants as a source of cheap labor and the democratic scapegoating and exclusion of racial minorities as outsiders.

Lowe contends that the history of Asian American exclusion from citizenship as well as the group's physical marginalization create a time-space that defies the nation's organization of space. Through analysis of Chinatown's sedimented spaces represented in Fae Myenne Ng's

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<sup>175</sup> For example, Colleen Lye's *America's Asia* and Brian Masaru Hayashi's *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American Internment* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2004). Further references to *Democratizing the Enemy* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *DE*.

<sup>176</sup> In *The Production of Space* (1974), Henri Lefebvre famously argues that ongoing capitalist expansion and exploitation must be examined as a spatial dynamic.

novel *Bone* (1994), Lowe argues that Chinatown contains layers of historical time, of “functions, purposes, and spheres of activity” that together create heterotopias, a spatial form identified by Michel Foucault that calls into question the dominant ordering of space.<sup>177</sup> By attempting to understand how spatial changes specifically within a liberal democratic context affect one’s experience of time and place, I seek to build upon Lowe’s analysis of “the disunity and discontinuity of the racialized urban space with the national space”; I focus on the co-existence of discontinuous racialized urban space with the emergence of what I call color-blind space, or spaces in which a racial logic implicitly functions usually for overtly democratic purposes.<sup>178</sup> While *No-No Boy* portrays the persistence of racialized spaces such as the ethnic ghetto as a disjunction from the egalitarian nature of civic spaces such as city parks and the public university, the novel also represents an altogether new phenomenon—the persistence of implicit racial values functioning within these abstract civic spaces that exemplify the post-war expansion of the modern welfare state.

Thus the novel portrays two competing and contradictory spatial forms, which I differentiate through their relationship to the competing logics of liberal democracy: *implicitly racialized spaces* are spaces where an inclusive democratic ideology is dominant, and *explicitly racialized spaces* are spaces where the liberal capitalist ideology is dominant.<sup>179</sup> I attend to the novel’s mapping out of the way in which these two different types of racialized space suture together the opposing tendencies between the democratic ordering of public space on the one hand, and the liberal capitalist logic that orders spaces such as the ethnic ghetto as a naturalized zone of competing ethnic entrepreneurship on the other. *No-No Boy*’s representation of the history of racialized space sheds significant light on the way in which racial minorities manage the opposing logics of U.S. liberal democracy—by which I mean the collectivizing force of democratic inclusion and equality and the disaggregating force of liberal capitalist individualism and freedom.

My basic assumption is that these abstract social forces become manifested in the physical environment and in the way that individuals and communities relate to that environment. The emergence of a new phenomenon of implicitly racialized space cognitively mapped in the novel represents the wartime and post-war diffusion of overt racism; I therefore locate the emergence of color-blind discourse squarely within the wartime and post-war expansion of the U.S. welfare state. This contextualization of color-blind discourse within the emergence of a globally flexible New Deal state infrastructure addresses the significance of color-blind discourse for U.S. post-war expansion as it originates in the wartime handling of Japanese American internees, and my analysis thereby presents a new spatial method for analyzing color-blind discourse, which is generally examined by scholars within the context of the conservative policy backlash to the Civil Rights movement; sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant most notably examine the emergence of color-blind racism in the public policies of the late seventies and eighties. According to Omi and Winant, color-blind racism is racism

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<sup>177</sup> Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1996), 120-126.

<sup>178</sup> Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 122.

<sup>179</sup> These terms overlap with Lefebvre’s distinction between spaces of representation and representational space in *The Production of Space*.

that works through coded language and state programs that deny the existence of racial difference while at the same time perpetuating racial discrimination.<sup>180</sup>

This type of implicit discrimination is interrogated in *No-No Boy* through the point of view of two key character positions: as citizens and war veterans, characters like Kenji Kano have special access to Seattle's welfare institutions such as the public university and the VA hospital based on their willingness to participate in military service. In contrast, Ichiro, a draft-resister, is denied these benefits and remains racialized in an unwanted population. He imagines himself to be polluting the populace and believes that he has been expelled from the university and the middle-class home.<sup>181</sup> Influenced by Allen Ginsburg's urban pastoral, my interpretation of *No-No Boy*'s exploration of the constitutive and enabling function of urban space brings attention to what I call the welfare pastoral, which describes the way in which the welfare state participates in the global capitalist development of space by managing racialized populations under overtly progressive policies such as the G.I. Bill.

*No-No Boy* thereby maps the local manifestation of spatial contradictions that reflect a global geopolitical ordering of space where even as the U.S. eradicates the overtly racist legal and political restrictions on people of Japanese ancestry in reaction against Nazi Germany, racism persists. The removal of major legal barriers to racial equality in the United States after World War II was, according to David Theo Goldberg, the result of the desire to distance U.S. race discourse from German barefaced advocacy of racial naturalism, or the exclusion and eradication of racial minorities from the state based on assumptions of their relationship to nature as a "prehistorical condition of pure Being naturally incapable of development and so [incapable of] historical progress."<sup>182</sup> U.S. policies in the post-war reflect this new liberalizing attitude: the Claims Act in 1948 awarded monetary compensation for property losses incurred during the internment; the 1952 McCarran-Walters Act enabled Japanese immigrants to become naturalized

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<sup>180</sup> Omi and Winant assert that the state plays a key role in creating and maintaining the racial dimensions within the social structure especially when it explicitly rejects the policy of differential treatment based on race: "We may notice someone's race, but we cannot act upon that awareness. We must act in a 'color-blind' fashion. This analysis of the meaning of race is immediately linked to a specific conception of the role of race in the social structure: it can play no part in government action, save in 'the enforcement of the ideal.' No state policy can legitimately require, recommend, or award different status according to race. This example can be classified as a particular type of racial project in the present-day U.S.—a 'neoconservative' one" (Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 57).

<sup>181</sup> I am interested in the novel's representation of the ongoing influence of the architectonics of power as it expands beyond the penitentiary or the school and as it exists in the negative spaces where no significant experience is imagined to take place such as in the alleys of ethnic ghettos, on the highways, and in other non-spaces where discipline is not normally seen to function. Within these spaces I note the predominance of two opposing norms for Japanese American identification, which I have cursorily sketched out as the spatial and identificatory distinction between the veteran and the draft resister. In examining the spatial practices enabled within these two identity choices, I highlight the novel's representation of the potential forms of personhood and aesthetics of transformation that emerge through an engagement with power's total domination of "natural" spaces and human natures, as all spaces become invested with interpellative currency and conversely become potential trajectories for lines of flight.

<sup>182</sup> David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 43.

U.S. citizens for the first time; the Supreme Court ruling in *Oyama v. California* in 1948 deemed section 9(a) of the Alien Land Laws that barred Japanese immigrants from purchasing agricultural land unconstitutional. In this ruling, explicit reference is made to the Nazi death camps in order to delineate the U.S.'s exceptional approach to its minorities.<sup>183</sup> And in 1952, the California Supreme Court ruling in *Fujii v. State* declared the Alien Land Laws unconstitutional.

Kenji contemplates the dilemma of being a racial minority in this progressive post-war climate; heartened by the triumph of democracy that gives him "reason to hope," Kenji is befuddled by the persistence of racial animosity that he witnesses in the everyday lives of private individuals: "the woman with the dark hair and large nose who has barely learned to speak English" who "makes a big show of vacating her bus seat when a Negro occupies the other half," the "Chinese girl [that] is at a high-school prom with a white boy" who feels that "[s]he has risen in the world," and the "Japanese, who feels he is better than the Chinese" and goes out to eat with his "Jewish companion...not like those kike bastards from the countries from which they've been kicked out," are a few examples that Kenji contemplates (*NN*, 135). Try as he might to uncover a "pattern" to explain ongoing racism, Kenji cannot locate any structural causes that would implicate the state; in the post-war climate of color-blind and pro-minority measures epitomized by the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, official racism appears to disappear.

The danger in color-blind discourse is precisely this tendency to privatize racial grievances, or political oppositions based on racial experiences, by reducing race to private grief, a consequence of having made a wrong individual choice with no political relevance.<sup>184</sup> Hannah Arendt presciently notes that, after World War I, national minorities were assimilated through Minority Treaties established by the League of Nations not as citizens but instead as a separate class.<sup>185</sup> Jewishness became a private identification that no longer held political currency just as Jews were deemed "stateless" and subject to persecution. Once Jews were assimilated into the state, they became a "superfluous" ideological symbol that garnered mass support for the multiple and often contradictory aims of the state; for Arendt anti-Semitism was effective precisely because it appealed to multiple interests, yet this appeal could not be achieved until Jews were stripped of their political agency by being assimilated.

Arendt's analysis of racism in relation to the rise of the nation-state demands a radical rethinking of racism, most popularly understood as what Foucault conceptualizes as the biopolitical racial scapegoating, which suggests that racism stems from the state's function of purging the population of whatever it sees as polluting it; this resonates with Goldberg's concept of racial naturalism. Arendt calls for a new analytic model for examining racism in its subtle workings within the nation-state, where racism becomes an invisible and yet essential force in organizing the contradictory aims of the state. Drawing from Arendt's analysis, I examine the internment of people of Japanese ancestry in the U.S. as the beginning of an officially color-blind state discourse: while denying overt forms of racist dehumanization, the state used a racial

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<sup>183</sup> Frank Chuman, *The Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese-Americans* (Del Mar: Publisher's Inc., 1976), 209; *Oyama vs. California*, 332 U.S. 633.

<sup>184</sup> Anne Cheng distinguishes between the private nature of grief and the collective and public dimension of grievances in *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (2001).

<sup>185</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1973), 269-290.



ideology to naturalize mass support for its military-expansionist aims during and after World War II. More specifically, *No-No Boy* represents the post-war expansion of the warfare-welfare state, which begins with the wartime use of Japanese racial difference to gain mass support—military, political, economic, and progressive social conceptions of “necessity”—to conjoin the state’s contradictory aims of warfare and welfare, and to suture together the production of discrepant spatial formations.

In such a spatial context, the persistence of explicitly racialized space remains a key point of entry into uncovering complex tensions between democratic inclusion and liberal capitalist exploitation in U.S. racial politics. Frustrated by his inability to understand the cause behind seemingly individual choices to behave in a racist manner, unable to “organize them in his mind so that the pattern could be seen and studied,” Kenji can only uncover the private responsibility placed on minorities not to make racist personal judgments (*NN*, 136). Yet, quite unexpectedly, Kenji views a spatial pattern of inequality when, in the following scene, he drives to Ichiro’s home in the decomposing Japanese ethnic enclave. Waiting outside of the Yamadas’ grocery store for Ichiro, Kenji views a spatial pattern of impoverishment and marginalization. The novel depicts what Kenji sees as he stares outside of his car window: “The street was quiet, deathly so...he saw the floodlighted sign painted on the side of a large brick building. It said: ‘444 Rooms. Clean. Running Water. Reasonable Rates.’ He had been in there once a long time ago and he knew that it was just a big flophouse full of drunks and vagrant souls...the grocery store was brightly lit” (*NN*, 136). Literally reading into the environment, Kenji enacts an epistemology of space that at once makes the economic degradation of the ethnic ghetto visible, legible in the pattern of letters appearing in the bright signage painted on the building and visible in the brightly lit grocery store located in the “deathly” zone of the ethnic ghetto, which reveals the disposability of racialized labor and the disavowed persistence of a politics of racial naturalism.

In the example of the ethnic ghetto, explicitly racialized space appears clearly differentiated from implicitly racialized space, but in the spatial form of the internment camp the mutual presence of both forms is evoked. A progressive ideology problematically informs the creation and management of the internment camps that were themselves promoted as educational/protective spaces where people of Japanese ancestry were indoctrinated to be good citizens by progressive sociologists and anthropologists. What can’t be rhetorically glossed over is the physical infrastructure of what is effectively a guarded prison and the racial segregation being enforced there—white custodians used separate facilities and ate in segregated mess halls.<sup>186</sup> As historians Richard Drinnon, Brian Masaru Hayashi, and John Howard have argued, the internment camps must be interpreted within an historical geography of the state’s relationship to explicitly racialized spaces such as the Jim Crow south and the racialized dispossession of Native American land. Drinnon and Massumi note that the two internment camps in Arizona (Gila River and Poston) were located on Native American reservations, and Howard examines the two internment camps located in the Jim Crow south—in Jerome and Rohwer, Arkansas.<sup>187</sup> According to Drinnon, the two Arkansas camps were built on lands that

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<sup>186</sup> Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps: North America* (Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 1971), 103.

<sup>187</sup> Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1987). Further references to *Keeper of Concentration Camps* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *KC*; John

the Farm Security Administration had purchased with the intent to aid poor southern farmers (KC, 8). Folding the spaces intended for “welfare” such as FSA land back into the “warfare” infrastructure of the camps, the state’s participation in the conjunction between warfare and welfare through a racialized discourse of space significantly illustrates the constitutive role that race and racialized space plays in the expansion of a new form of global power, the warfare-welfare state.

A closer examination of the interpellative function of space reveals the ongoing production and association of racialized spaces with natural material worlds; the good Japanese citizen inhabits the healthy natural environment provided by the biopolitical state or the scientific management of space, and the bad Japanese inhabits the damaged “natural” environment of the ethnic ghetto that remains the untamed location of economic competition and exploitation. I have explored the relationship between racial subjects and what Neil Smith has outlined as a dual ideology of nature with the rise of an American bourgeois hegemony in the two previous chapters. Drawing from Smith’s analysis, I related the dual ideology of nature to the dual and incompatible logics within U.S. liberal democracy—the disjunction between the liberal capitalist objectification and externalization of nature for use, and the democratic idealization of nature as a timeless symbol of U.S. political exceptionalism. The dual inscription of Japanese racial difference as signs both of exemplary citizenship and economic disposability similarly manages the tension within liberal democracy to the extent that it contains the competing logics of democratic equality and liberal individualism within a dualism perceived to exist within the “nature” of Japanese racial definition.

While the dissertation as a whole aims to theorize this dual ideology of nature in relation to a duality within the form of race in twentieth century U.S. liberal democracy through analysis of the representational cognitive mapping of the environment, in this chapter I focus more specifically on the duality in race and nature as it manifests through the co-existence of modernist structural management of the environment and the postmodern liberation of identity and identification from environmental determinism. These two opposing tendencies are yet consistent with what David Harvey, Edward Soja, and others have analyzed as the intensification and extensification of spatial practices from modernism to postmodernism. The shift from a Fordist rationalized model of management to the post-Fordist methods of “flexible” accumulation, while they seem contradictory, merely reflects an intensification of methods through which the productivity of the laborer is extracted, what Harvey calls “labour control.”<sup>188</sup> This chapter brings into relief the racial contours of the transition from modern to postmodern modes of environmental control through an examination of narrative form—I examine the relationship between American literary naturalism’s attempt to map late-nineteenth century environmental expressions of the capitalist system and the twentieth-century urban pastoral, influenced by conceptions of the city as a natural entity that abides by predictable ecological laws. My analysis of ethnic assimilation into the urban city seeks to theorize the intersection between naturalism and pastoralism in a new form that I call the welfare pastoral, which illustrates the mutual imbrication of postmodern social forces and modernist state planning in the production of implicitly racial and explicitly racialized spaces in the age of globalization.

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Howard, *Concentration Camps on the Home Front: Japanese Americans in the House of Jim Crow* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>188</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 1990), 123-124.

### Explicitly Racialized Space: Who and What Survives ‘Creative Destruction’

Set in the Japanese ethnic enclave in Seattle, *No-No Boy* begins with a scene of Ichiro’s return home, having “been gone four years, two in camp and two in prison.”<sup>189</sup> This first sentence of the novel immediately introduces Ichiro’s history in the state’s detention centers. For the years spent in prison, he is ostracized by his peers in the Japanese community as a so-called “no-no boy,” a pejorative term that identifies draft resistance with disloyalty based on a racialized identification with Japan. While the novel begins with Ichiro’s release from prison, the reader gets the sense that he is still very much imprisoned, as the paragraph that follows describes his inner mood: “Walking down the street that autumn morning...he felt like an intruder in a world to which he had no claim....Best thing I can do would be to kill some son of a bitch and head back to prison” (*NN*, 1). Free indirect discourse reveals Ichiro’s self-perception, and the novel thereby introduces two different levels of imprisonment that mutually inform one another: psychic imprisonment where the state’s carceral logic still functions in Ichiro’s mind, and spatial imprisonment. Thus the description of the physical geography of Seattle and of the ethnic enclave directly mirrors Ichiro’s inner mood of being racially persecuted: The city’s clock “tower” that Ichiro sees upon his arrival is described as “dirty,” of a “dirty city. Dirtier, certainly, than it had a right to be after only four years” (*NN*, 1). Prior to this statement, the tower symbol is noted twice in the preface in reference to Okada’s description of the physical structure of the internment camps. I will cite the first example: “The whisking and transporting of Japanese and the construction of camps with barbed wire and ominous towers supporting fully armed soldiers in places like Idaho and Wyoming and Arizona, places which even Hollywood scorned for background, had become skills which demanded the utmost of America’s great organizing ability” (*NN*, ix-x).

Here both ethnic ghetto and internment camp are related through a state infrastructure that bespeaks “America’s great organizing ability,” which Foucault defines as the state’s biopolitical ability to manage populations, “to make live, and let die,” through a scientific discourse. Arendt perceptively notes that with the rise of the nation-state in the early twentieth century, the state wields absolute power through its authority over both the security of its people and its authority over who deserves to be killed in the name of that security, what she calls the state’s “monopoly” on killing. The novel similarly notes a disturbing overlap between the state’s organization of camp, and its positive capacity to organize populations to ameliorate life. In paying particular attention to these kinds of juxtapositions, which I broadly distinguish as the aims of warfare/economic competition and the aims of welfare/democratic equalization, I explore the critical yet undertheorized importance of spatial form, which is the “scorned background” of realist representation, as it relates to U.S. racial form, the forms of personhood enabled by the state and represented in the novel, and the aesthetic forms that emerge through this process of engagement with what Edward Soja calls the spatiality of social life.

Almost immediately upon Ichiro’s return, he notices Ito Minato, an old acquaintance who is dressed in army fatigues and whose recognition of Ichiro is experienced as form of policing and detention: “ ‘Hey, Itchy!’ The caller’s footsteps ran toward him. An arm was placed across his back. Ichiro stopped and faced the other Japanese....There was no way out now” (*NN*, 2). Eto, although now a civilian, remains dressed in “green, army-fatigue trousers and an

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<sup>189</sup> John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2001), 1. Further references to *No-No Boy* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *NN*.

Eisenhower Jacket” (*NN*, 2). This interaction together with Eto’s army-issue attire imply the persistence of the carceral logics of the internment camps; “the friendliness was gone as he [Eto] said: ‘No-No boy huh?... ‘Rotten bastard. Shit on you.’ Eto coughed up a mouthful of sputum and rolled his words around it: ‘Rotten, no-good bastard’” (*NN*, 3-4). The multiplicity in Eto’s roles—as a fellow Japanese, as a military officer, as a private individual policing Main Street and “the jury” that passes sentence on Ichiro—together create an overwhelming sense of the persistence of the war-time factors that coordinated legal, military, and civic organizations in the racial persecution of the Japanese on the West Coast.

Wanting to gouge out his own eyes, Ichiro decides that it would be pointless precisely because the dominant perception has already been internalized as a self-perception, “the eyes he didn’t have the courage to face were ever present” (*NN*, 3). As if recognizing how power functions both internally and externally, Ichiro, immediately after this “hailing” and interpellation, proceeds to register the external geography of racial degradation:

He turned as he lifted the suitcase off the ground and hurried away from the legs and the eyes from which no escape was possible. Jackson Street started at the waterfront and stretched past the two train depots and up the hill all the way to the lake....For Ichiro, Jackson Street signified that section of the city immediately beyond the railroad tracks between Fifth and Twelfth Avenues. That was the section which used to be pretty much Japanese town. It was adjacent to Chinatown and most of the gambling and prostitution and drinking seemed to favor the area. Like the dirty clock tower of the depot, the filth of Jackson Street had increased (*NN*, 4).

Here Ichiro sketches out for the reader the territorial boundaries of a disappearing Japantown, a racialized space that is economically depressed and socially marginalized and stigmatized. The “dirty clock tower,” an image used in the preface to denote the internment camps, is explicitly related to the spatial geography of Japantown that at the same time no longer exists so that the spatial resonances between the camp and the ethnic ghetto evoke the spatial traces of a past that is being both literally and figuratively obliterated. Yet Ichiro’s point of view recalls the historical past through the mapping of reiterated environmental symbols, and his liberation from prison makes the racial and spatial contours of the carceral state visible in the historical present.<sup>190</sup>

Several critics have argued that the internment only intensified post-war control over the population due to its emphasis on indoctrination or Americanization where punishment was internalized, and due to the intense level of surveillance that the Japanese Americans who left camp underwent. According to Drinnon, citizens who were given leave clearance were “told where to live, with whom to associate, how to dress and act, and what to do for a livelihood” (*KC*, 54). They were also encouraged to spy on one another—all behavior that Drinnon describes as “the earmarks of a parole” rather than liberation. The persistence of racial surveillance must also be contextualized within the spatially marked or stigmatized geopolitical location of the ethnic ghetto, which functions on a more literal level like a prison and belies the official policy of Americanization by taking on the characteristic “ugliness” of racial marking:

Being on Jackson Street with its familiar store fronts and taverns and restaurants,

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<sup>190</sup> In *Empire* (2001), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that disciplinary institutions function through the process of breaking down in form of what they call biopolitical control. While prisons, public education, and the family are considered locations in crisis, the discourses produced within these locations have been dispersed throughout society.

which were somehow different because the war had left its mark on them, was like trying to find one's way out of a dream that seemed real most of the time but wasn't really real because it was still only a dream. The war had wrought violent changes upon the people, and the people, in turn, working hard and living hard and earning a lot of money and spending it on whatever was available, had distorted the profile of Jackson Street. The street had about it the air of a carnival without quite succeeding at becoming one. A shooting gallery stood where once had been a clothing store; fish and chips had replaced a jewelry shop; and a bunch of Negroes were horsing around raucously in front of a pool parlor. Everything looked older and dirtier and shabbier (*NN*, 5).

This passage works through an epistemology of space in which the war is identified as the cause of spatial degradation that in turn “wrought violent changes upon the people.” Described as a form of writing, the disfiguring mark on the street at the same time evokes a homology with racial marking, which is described in the preface: “[T]he writing was scrawled for them. The Jap-Jew would look in the mirror this Sunday night and see a Jap-Jew” (*NN*, viii). Racialized space occupies an ambiguous position as both cause and reflection of social inscription or virtual marking (writing, mirror images, marks) as it bears both upon the bodily and the material—the war as writing on the wall marks the Japanese to be “animals of a different breed” (*NN*, vii).

What in fact this scene reveals is a relationality or kinship between race and space, both being inscribed with material and ideational value; the novel self consciously comments on this interplay by situating the street description all within Ichiro imagination not as he directly apprehends the street but as he “paused momentarily at an alley” gazing at what was once “a back door to a movie house” (*NN*, 4-5). This layering of material and imaginary space resists Ichiro's visual attempt to penetrate and contain and thereby understand the landscape within a realist perspective; the coexistence of material and ideational values furthermore cause an impasse in perception as the scene is described by Ichiro to be an unreal dream or unsuccessful carnival. These observations emphasize two differing and competing kinds of degradation: spatial physical decay that can be represented through a realist description of material space versus the abstract idea of decay, which is represented through a naturalistic homology between external space and the abstract social value of racial identification. The novel's description of the street as “older and dirtier and shabbier” is therefore both an objective-realist description, and a naturalistic mystification of space that draws a symbolic equivalence with the later description of the “Negroes horsing around raucously” on the street.

Dirtiness is ideologically associated with the encroachment of an African American underclass just as cleanliness is associated with Japanese ethnic entrepreneurship. This is suggested in the description of the fish and chips restaurant that replaces a jewelry shop, and the shooting gallery that replaces a clothing store. Naturalistic equivalence between material and ideational space furthermore points to a magical causality in which the street's decay is not perceived to be caused by structural factors. Instead the street's decay is explained by the cultural traits displayed by the invasion of this new ethnic entrepreneurial group, which is one of the “effects” of the war. To put it more directly, the street is decaying because African Americans are lazy and unemployable. The novel's use of naturalistic description illustrates a key aspect of explicitly racialized space—how virtual power in the form of language and images seamlessly inscribes social meaning into both material space and physical bodies. It is the “natural” cultural competition between African Americans and Japanese Americans that results in the inscription

of the ethnic ghetto as a space of bad nature, of a neighborhood spiraling into decay.<sup>191</sup>

Claire Jean Kim asserts that Asian American and African Americans are organized in a “racial order” that situates the two groups in relation to a white ideal.<sup>192</sup> This competitive animosity is evident in Ichiro’s exchange with the black men on the street who in return, stereotype Ichiro as the “Jap-boy” who should “[g]o back to Tokyo” (*NN*, 5). According to Kim, African Americans claim territorial superiority as natives against the Japanese foreigner, while the Japanese “foreigner” claims greater merit within the dominant work ethic. In this meritocratic model of racial ordering, Japanese Americans are seen as highly educated and industrious and African Americans as “raucous” and lagging behind in education not because of racial oppression but because of differences in cultural values and customs. These racial differences are never acknowledged as absolute differences, but rather as “a difference of degree” so that all races included as imperfect or “distorted” approximations of an ideal white identity; conflict then becomes a privatized struggle, a survival of the fittest culture (*E*, 190-195). In this sense, the ethnic ghetto exhibits and even epitomizes the liberal capitalist values of individual competition and entrepreneurship. Racial antagonism on the street provides a “natural” explanation for the a liberal capitalist notion of competition amongst equal individuals.

David Harvey borrows Joseph Schumpeter’s term “creative destruction” to explain how business entrepreneurs are imagined to facilitate the capitalist expansion through the production and destruction of the environment. For Schumpeter, the entrepreneur is “the creative destroyer *par excellence* because the entrepreneur was prepared to push the consequences of technical and social innovation to vital extremes.”<sup>193</sup> Harvey argues that creative destruction is not specific to entrepreneurs and that it is on the contrary endemic to the processes of capitalist expansion that “exacerbate[es] insecurity and instability, as masses of capital and workers shift from one line of production to another, leaving whole sectors devastated, while the perpetual flux in consumer wants, tastes, and needs becomes a permanent locus of uncertainty and struggle.”<sup>194</sup> Capitalist creative destruction produces uneven development, which explains how capitalism continues to expand by constantly investing and divesting capital from various sectors of the economy. The territorial expression of racial differentiation created in the ethnic ghetto makes visible how a racialized figure of entrepreneurship serves as an alibi for capitalist expansion and the violence that uneven development imposes on social life by naturalizing conflict as a private struggle between individual cultures.

According to historian Quentard Taylor, African American and Japanese American populations participated differently in the process of creative destruction in Seattle’s warfare-welfare economy. African American migration to the city resulted in a quadrupling of the pre-war population as a result of the demand for industrial jobs.<sup>195</sup> In contrast, “Seattle’s Nihonmachi

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<sup>191</sup> Hardt and Negri call this form of power that emerged in the Cold War, imperial racism. This is further defined by the process that Étienne Balibar calls differential racism.

<sup>192</sup> Claire Jean Kim has written extensively about the comparative racial ordering of African Americans and Asian Americans in relation to the dominant white norm, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans,” *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (1999): 105–138; *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York City* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2003).

<sup>193</sup> Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 17.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>195</sup> Quentard Taylor, “Blacks and Asians in a White City: Japanese Americans and African Americans in Seattle, 1890-1940,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 22 (November 1991): 428.

[Okada's Japantown] disappeared from 1942 to 1945....The wartime disruption of the community, coupled- ironically- with a dramatic lowering of anti-Japanese enmity after World War II, prevented the reestablishment of the spatial community" since "[p]ost-war Japanese Seattle, far more middle class and well-educated than black Seattle, was, fortunately, poised to exploit the liberalizing attitudes."<sup>196</sup> While the Japanese community represented what some have called middleman minorities or ethnic entrepreneurs prior to the war, this position is superceded by the African American community's role in the industrial warfare economy. I am asserting that the violence of capitalist expansion rooted in creative destruction becomes rationalized when it is coupled with ethnic competition; Ichiro's graphic representation of the disappearance of Japanese ethnic entrepreneurs depicts a racial ideology functioning to naturalize the politico-economic production of space – the transition from the New Deal welfare economy to the warfare economy driven by militarization to a post-war warfare-welfare economy dominated by transnational capitalist expansion appears to be a natural change in ethnic population flows.

### **Implicitly Racialized Space: the Welfare State**

Contrasting the explicit racial violence that appears endemic to the ethnic ghetto, the novel poses the implicitly racial spaces of civic life, what Lefebvre calls metaphoric spaces of representation. Ichiro attempts to escape his racial identification by finding refuge in these spaces; he throws himself into a bus that takes him through the financial district to the public university:

A bus turned into the stop and he hurled himself into it....As the bus sped down Jackson Street and made a turn at Fourth to go through downtown, Ichiro visualized the blocks ahead, picturing in his mind the buildings he remembered and reciting the names of the streets lying ahead, and he was pleased that he remembered so much unerringly. Not until the bus had traversed the business district...did he realize that he was on the same bus which he used to take every morning as a university student (*NN*, 52-53).

The downtown streets appear like timeless spaces where Ichiro's memory of the past maps seamlessly onto the present physical environment. Here a different kind of epistemology of space functions in which the fear of the unknown is replaced by scientific certainty as an efficient transit system facilitates a smooth and repetitive circuit between various planned spaces neatly separated by their function. In his analysis of what he calls a high modernist city, James C. Scott asserts that twentieth-century industrial warfare provided impetus for "the total mobilization of the society and the economy."<sup>197</sup> For this end, high modernist cities organized every aspect of social life by creating legible, planned, and simplified grids that emphasized linear monofunctional zoning to facilitate capitalist production and state management through the domination of both physical and human nature.<sup>198</sup> Scott's argument suggests that it is not the individual who creates space; instead it is the state's management of space that creates a second order nature that mobilizes and in a sense establishes a more total control over the individual through its ability to enhance the lives of those living within its established matrices of control. I call *No-No Boy's* representation of this type of space and how it functions, the welfare pastoral.

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<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>197</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 97.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-90.

According to historian Carl Abbott, Seattle emerged in the post-war as what he calls a network city that established transnational economic relations in Asia rather than remaining like Portland a city reliant on the local economy. This was furthermore facilitated by the growth of war industries such as the expansion of Boeing with Korean War orders and Cold War contracts and the expansion of the University of Washington with newly available federal research funds.<sup>199</sup> Seattle as a city participated in the emergence of global high modernist space, a facet of globalization that was nationally aided by the enhancement of national transportation networks. In 1956, one year prior to the publication of *No-No Boy*, the Federal-Aid Highway Act authorized the creation of a national highway system to bastion the nation's economic and military infrastructure. Jason Scott Smith reasons that defense programs like the Manhattan Project would not be possible without the state's hand in national infrastructure development.<sup>200</sup>

In *No-No Boy*, the highway symbolically binds together a number of homogenized yet natural-seeming spaces related to Seattle's participation in Cold War modernization. Ichiro's drive out to Portland with Kenji, the Japanese American veteran, is made on an interstate highway that establishes the "monotony" of "an interminable stretch of asphalt and concrete cutting through the darkness" (*NN*, 139). Ichiro and Kenji drive through numerous quaint "villages" and arrive in "morning traffic" at the Portland VA hospital. The highway is the main artery that orchestrates the interconnection between various villages and urban centers in such a way that illustrates the state's production of space that at the same time evokes symbols of nature to naturalize its controlling function. For example, Ichiro and Kenji see "a big, new hospital with plenty of glass and neat, green lawns on all sides"; this is a space that evokes not only the park that Kenji and Ichiro drive through in their initial meeting, "a winding road, with trees and neat, green grass on both sides of them," but it also replicates Ichiro's vision of the university campus' "curved lanes" and "grass" as a garden of Eden (*NN*, 143, 61, 57). Even the engineer's slide rule embodies "the greenness of the grass on the campus" that Ichiro imagines might have "pushed out the bitterness" (*NN*, 53). This representation the welfare pastoral reveals the intersection between meticulous natural landscaping and productive institutions such as the university and the middle class home as well as the life-preserving function of the hospital such that these abstract civic spaces create seemingly natural social behavior; once Ichiro gets off the bus at the university, "he walked naturally toward the campus" (*NN*, 54). In all of these instances, nature is meticulously groomed as a biopolitical tool that enhances the domination of body and mind through the symbolic spatial correlation with nature and by extension the productive energies of life itself. But just as these spaces are produced by modernity's compulsive attempts to overcome natural difference with rational planning, seemingly natural identities are revealed to be the compulsive habitual responses to the planned environment.

For Foucault, what he calls the rise of neo-liberal biopolitics in reaction to the New Deal welfare state is rooted in liberalism; biopolitics as a "non-state governmentality" is a reaction against governmentality in the sense that biopolitics functions through the management of civil society, which is imagined to be threatened by the expansion of the state. In this more passive form of control, the environment, "environmental technology" and "environmental psychology" become central to the supervision of civil society (*BB*, 259). I examine how the welfare state yet

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<sup>199</sup> Carl Abbott, "Regional City and Network City: Portland and Seattle in the Twentieth Century," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 23, (August 1992), 314.

<sup>200</sup> Jason Scott Smith, *Building New Deal Liberalism: The Political Economy of Public Works, 1933-1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005).



participates in the production of passive environmental controls that facilitate capitalist expansion, meaning that the welfare state and capitalist expansion are not in the extreme opposition that Foucault suggests. I argue that what I am calling the welfare pastoral is evidence of how the welfare state facilitated capitalist expansion in the postwar period and radically redefined the environment as a method of managing civil society.

The principle actor in biopolitical control is a person who is sensitive to variables in the environment based on rational conduct: “Rational conduct is any conduct which is sensitive to modifications in the variables of the environment and which responds to this in a non-random way, in a systematic way, and economics can therefore be defined as the science of the systematic nature of responses to environmental variables” (*BB*, 269). The subject of biopolitical control, what Foucault calls *homo oeconomicus*, is someone much like Ichiro, someone left alone to pursue his own freedom, yet this kind of freedom is also associated with a certain docility as “the person who accepts reality or who responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment, and appears precisely as someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment” (*BB*, 270). Ichiro approaches his imprisonment in the from the perspective of a rational choice that he made freely, and he registers this choice for the way it alters his “systematic” relationship to the environment. Blaming himself for having made the wrong choice in refusing the draft, Ichiro describes how his access to the middle class home is contingently cut off as he “looked out [from the car] at the houses, the big, roomy houses of brick and glass which belonged in magazines and were of that world which was no longer his to dream about” (*NN*, 60). A highly symbolic space, the middle class home is available only to those Japanese who like Kenji agreed to “packing a rifle” in exchange for “[a] medal, a car, a pension, and even an education”; the middle-class home represents privileged access to the welfare state for those willing to enforce militarism as a form of citizenship (*NN*, 60). Kenji’s father’s home is therefore symbolically situated along the artery of the military-industrial complex, on the six-lane highway near “spacious super gas-stations,” and it represents one of the “millions of other homes in America” that Ichiro imagines will “never be his own” (*NN*, 117, 26). Having rejected military service and thereby lacking these environmental escapes into seemingly color-blind spaces, Ichiro’s departure from the university is described as a loss of both an ideational Edenic nature and the human sensual capacity to register the world: “I have forefeited and forfeiting it, have lost the right to see and hear and become excited over things which are of that wonderful past. And then he crossed the street and did not look back at the buildings and students and curved lanes and grass which was the garden in the forsaken land” (*NN*, 57). Returning home to the ethnic enclave, Ichiro’s spatial practice outlines a potential line of flight from the modern city’s environmental control, unraveling the coherence of its domination over and meticulous “preservation” of natural-seeming environments and human natures.

Army veterans are privileged to state aid that attempts to preserve what Foucault calls “human capital,” which is the composite of an individuals skills and privileges that allow him to survive in a liberal capitalist environment where the individuals are responsible for protecting themselves against economic risks (*BB*, 224-226). Imagined as a form of “rehabilitation” for military veterans, Charles B. Nam asserts that the G.I. Bill of Rights was “designed to provide the men whose lives were interrupted by military service with, among other things, support to

begin or continue their formal education or vocational training.”<sup>201</sup> G.I. Bill programs embodied the popularity of progressive state legislation that “had a profound effect in increasing the number of persons who took specialized courses,” and students specifically trained in engineering numbered about half a million veterans.<sup>202</sup> For Eto, his service in the military opens both educational and economic opportunities. He tells Ichiro, “Didn’t get out [of the army] in time to make the quarter, but I’m planning to go to school” (*NN*, 2). The university’s division of time into “quarters” illustrates Eto’s rehabilitation in terms of a regained normative time. Unable to enter the university like other Japanese Americans who are “goin’ to school on the G.I.,” Ichiro and other No-No Boys struggle to find jobs that neither whites nor Japanese American veterans want (*NN*, 48, 203). While job hunting in Portland, Ichiro expresses his understanding that finding a job is the only way for him to regain hope and a positive temporal orientation: “No matter how much or how long he thought about it, it seemed hopeless. Still, he could not stop. He had to keep searching until he found work” (*NN*, 146). In the novel, the welfare state’s hand in military-economic development is evident in its racial bifurcation of social welfare into two separate tiers: those Japanese Americans who have access to state protection through military service, and those who have denied military service and must claim a socially stigmatized form of welfare with much fewer privileges, these are the unemployed, underemployed, or unemployable.

Professor Brown, Ichiro’s former engineering professor at the university, mistakes Ichiro for a veteran and invites him to return to the engineering program for its access to lucrative opportunities through participation in military-economic development. Yet the professor has no memory of Ichiro although he at the same time implicitly misrecognizes him as a Japanese American army veteran capable of resuming his studies. Brown insists, “‘Of course I remember. I knew the moment you stepped inside. Let me think now. No, No, don’t tell me.’ The professor studied him thoughtfully. ‘You’re Su...Suzu...no...Tsuji...’” (*NN*, 55). Professor Brown’s attempts to remember Ichiro’s name reveal his search for a Japanese surname. His following reference to Ichiro is equally ambiguous as he exclaims, “‘Lots of you fellows coming back’” (*NN*, 55). The reference to “you fellows” could either refer back to Ichiro’s Japanese identity or it could refer to his following reference to former students turned soldiers who are returning to school with the G.I. benefits. Indeed it is Brown’s implied association of Japanese American students with the military, referring to “[t]hat outfit in Italy,” that provides the meritorious justification for their access to the “[b]ig opportunities” that are now available at the university (*NN*, 56).

The Japanese American war veteran in the post-war period was a nationally recognized figure, and the success of what many called the “Jap-Crow” military was ironically instrumental in the ushering in of a new era of racial toleration and integration for Japanese Americans after the war. The 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion was an all-Japanese American Battalion that was absorbed into the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, “[f]or its size and length of service, the 100<sup>th</sup>/442<sup>nd</sup> was the most highly decorated unit in the entire war, receiving seven Presidential Unit Citations, more than 18,000 individual decorations, and one Congressional Medal of Honor.”<sup>203</sup> War

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<sup>201</sup> Charles B. Nam, “Impact of the ‘GI Bill’ on the Educational Level of the Male Population,” *Social Forces* 43, (October 1964), 40.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>203</sup> David A. Takami, *Divided Destiny: A History of Japanese Americans in Seattle* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1998), 69.

Secretary Henry L. Stimson followed the progress of the combat units as an issue of pride and prestige, and the Office of War Information and the War Relocation Authority (WRA) widely publicized the decorations that were bestowed on the Japanese American troops.<sup>204</sup> Professor Brown's recognition of the 442<sup>nd</sup> reflects the popular color-blind attitude toward Japanese Americans as model American citizens.

Yet implicitly conjoining citizenship rights with military service, the valorization of the Japanese American veteran popularized the post-war shift in welfare services that Michael K. Brown argues resulted in what he calls the truncation of universalism with the failure of the Third New Deal.<sup>205</sup> Proponents of the G.I. Bill intended it to be a steppingstone toward universal welfare but congressional conservatives used it as a wedge issue to truncate the expansion of the welfare state. Congressional liberals introduced key proposals to raise benefits for unemployment such as the Murray-Kilgore Bill of 1944 and the Full Employment Act of 1945, but in the end Congress endorsed the G.I. Bill that, Brown argues, only addressed unemployment as a temporary issue.<sup>206</sup> Opposing increases to social security taxes, which Truman intended to fund the expansion of the welfare state, Congress "used the G.I. Bill to address the specter of postwar unemployment. . . . The G.I. Bill became the 1940s version of the WPA: it was temporary and politically expedient."<sup>207</sup> Brown asserts that veterans' benefits became a crucial wedge issue that limited educational opportunities by providing "a narrow entitlement for a select group of men."<sup>208</sup> Positive attitudes toward racial segregation in the military is partially explained by the ideological function that the Japanese Americans in the military served by perpetuating in the media the myth of cultural (insert racial) superiority which participated in the state's truncation of social welfare through the G.I. Bill to a small population of citizens deemed exceptional (for military service).

Professor Brown welcomes Ichiro into this select group, explaining how he himself fought in the First World War, "[d]id some consulting work for the navy this last one, but as a civilian"; he encourages Ichiro to enter the lucrative field (*NN*, 54). Yet Ichiro finds cause for hesitation, bewildered by the assumptions that Professor Brown has made about his identity and experience, he contemplates, "It was seeing without meeting, talking without hearing, smiling without feeling" (*NN*, 57). This is perhaps the earliest novelistic representation of color-blind discourse; moreover, the spatial context in which this exchange occurs is significant. A color-blind attitude does not simply reflect Professor Brown's democratic acceptance of Ichiro as a minority student; instead, it is activated in the university context to validate the truncation of welfare within the civic institutional location of the public university, the circling back of welfare issues into the exigencies of the warfare state. The professor's color-blind attitude ignores potentially disruptive differences (the fact that Ichiro is a No-No Boy) and affirms differences that function to valorize the welfare state's privileging of a military-industrial-academic complex. His celebration of Japanese American difference affirms a merit-based system of social services based on prior military service, and the Japanese American veteran culturally naturalizes these merits as an inherent trait within Japanese ethnic definition. In this

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<sup>204</sup> Daniels, *Concentration Camps*, 153.

<sup>205</sup> Michael K. Brown, *Race, Money, and the American Welfare State* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999), 102-105.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-116.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

way, the novel innovatively explores how color-blind discourse inscribes state institutions as racialized spaces, or spaces in which an implicitly racial logic conjoins the seemingly contradictory aims of welfare and warfare.

In broader context, color-blind discourse is significant as it defines the very nature of U.S. global governance, characterized by post-war modernization theories in which economic “underdevelopment” became a code word to describe the inferiority (degeneracy) of Asia and other decolonizing nations. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. notes, “Our engineers can transform arid plains or poverty-stricken river valleys into wonderlands of vegetation and power... The Tennessee Valley Authority is a weapon which, if properly employed, might outbid all the social ruthlessness of the Communists for support of the people of Asia” (*BND*, 250). The Cold War conflation between politics and economics facilitated the expansion of a global color-blind discourse that repressed capitalism’s continued production of racial and class hierarchies. In the post-war era, New Deal spending became increasingly defense-related as it went global. President Truman introduced a Point Four program in his 1949 inaugural address that outlined a program of economic aid for the underdeveloped nations of Asia that was deemed a “Fair Deal for the World,” intended to establish Asia as a series of buffer states against the spread of Communism.<sup>209</sup>

With this internationalization of the New Deal agenda, Smith notes that the “Point Four program made important strides, building ...highways and airports in Afghanistan, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, and Vietnam, among other places” (*BND*, 249). Numerous global projects were subsidized in the name of national security, “[p]rivate construction firms, such as Bechtel and Brown & Root (today a subsidiary of Halliburton) went into business overseas, drawing on the knowledge and capacities they had acquired while building public works for the New Deal state” (*BND*, 233). The predominance of modernization theory ideologically supported global economic development as a way to expand democracy abroad. Pre-eminent modernization theorist, Edward Shils, declared in a speech that decolonized nations might model themselves on American capitalist development in such a way that yet maintains national autonomy; in the speech he allows, “‘Modern’ means being western without the onus of following the West. It is the model of the West detached in some way from its geographical origins and locus.”<sup>210</sup> According to Nils Gilman, Cold War modernization theory proposed to overcome the spatial divide between the global North and global South by exporting U.S. modernity; what the then decolonizing regions in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East purportedly lacked was proper modern “development.” Gilman asserts that in this way frustrated New Dealers sought to try their hand abroad, significantly linking the welfare state’s liberal bureaucracy to the Cold War expansion of global capitalism. Massumi and Smith note that a number of New Dealers involved with the administration of the camps took their knowledge abroad and applied it to the U.S. occupation of Japan, modernization projects in the Global South, and the rebuilding of Europe. Through a global engagement with the racialized spaces of the Global South, U.S. modernization theory exemplifies the broad-scale nature of color-blind discourse as it participated in economic development, or the privileging of economic freedom as a dominant force in the post-war reorganization and production of global geopolitical space.

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<sup>209</sup> Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2003), 59, 71.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

The U.S. welfare state in the post-war period significantly aligned itself along this global liberal capitalist model of free economic development by severely undercutting social welfare services. The novel suggests a significant correlation between racialized space and this monetization of democracy in modernization projects; the Christian Rehabilitation Center that Ichiro visits near the end of the novel, after having “forfeited” access to the university and a job in engineering, reveals the disposability of the underclass within the economic development model for democracy. Freddie, a fellow No-No Boy who refers Ichiro here for work, mistakenly refers to the center as the “Reclamation Center,” a reference to New Deal land reclamation projects that were part of the domestic modernization program. Described as a “charitable community,” the Center appears more to the service of military-industrial development as the misfits of society work here to recycle the detritus of a warfare-welfare state: a description of the grounds reveals “an expanse of open ground on which the junk was in the form and shape of yellowed iceboxes and ancient washing machines a huge stack of iron beds and odds and ends of clumsy, rusted machinery and tangled heaps of pipes and one dilapidated two-and-a-half-ton army truck” (*NN*, 216). In this recycling center of U.S. military industrialism, the workers are disposable “like the junk, patched up and refinished but with the wasted best years irrevocably buried” (*NN*, 216).

Post-war Seattle emerges as a global network city that appears to embody economic development that appears to create the physical landscape of a homogeneously modern city. But Ichiro’s quest for a job reveals the underside to modern development—its conflation of social welfare with economic development that results in discrimination against minoritized and underprivileged and chronically underemployed populations.<sup>211</sup> While the G.I. Bill maintains an interest in the social welfare of the nation’s veterans through the improvement of their labor skills, *No-No Boy* represents a simultaneous marginalization of the underclass by the efficiency and economy demanded by the modern welfare state working for the ends of global development.

Mr. Morrison, the chipper manager of the Rehabilitation Center, brims with humanistic enthusiasm, “I like my work, Ichiro,” he says,

‘I like it because I’m working with people and for people who need help. Drunks, morons, incompetents, delinquents, the physically handicapped. I’ve helped them all and it gives me great satisfaction. But you and Gary, there’s nothing wrong with you. You don’t belong here. All I can do for you is to give you a job and hope... Youth, intelligence, charm, a degree in fine arts, health- [Gary’s] got everything’ (*NN*, 220).

This space of liberal reform ends up participating in the process of capitalist creative destruction; only here it is in the guise of rehabilitation, which suggests that the destructiveness of unemployment is due to a private illness suffered by the individual. Here there is something about Ichiro and Gary, another No-No Boy, that refuses to be cured, “patched up and refinished” by the humanistic impulse of reform that facilitates the creative destruction of the labor force. Morrison deduces that Ichiro’s problem is nothing like the biologized/medicalized underclass whose “handicap” he treats as an “illness.” Quite to the contrary, Ichiro is seen as a model minority with exceptionally productive human capacities as Morrison insists that he “could step

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<sup>211</sup> The historic failure of Truman’s Fair Deal to create universal health insurance helped to define employment based social security benefits as the “institutional core of the American welfare state” (Brown, *Race, Money*, 119).

into a hundred jobs” and “do a more competent job than the people in them”(NN, 220). As in his encounter with Professor Brown, no mention is made of Ichiro’s racial difference—instead Morrison points to an excess of social legitimacy, “[y]outh, intelligence, charm, a degree in fine arts, health.”

Ichiro’s cultural difference is again being celebrated in color-blind discourse, here used to rationalize the exclusion of the underclass from society for lacking the personal qualifications and private merit inherent in Japanese cultural difference. Stopping to speak briefly with Gary, Ichiro discovers a very different perspective that undercuts the exceptionalism so effusively expressed by Morrison. Gary reminds Ichiro of the continued class discrimination faced by Japanese Americans who are not able to purchase houses in exclusive neighborhoods like the Broadmoor district. Once the veterans realize that they are still racially discriminated against, the No-No Boys will be forgotten; Gary assures Ichiro: “Time will make them [the veterans] forget, but I’m not so sure that we will” (NN, 227).

Just as Gary insists on drawing a spatial example of ongoing racial discrimination that resonates with the plight of the underclass, Ichiro draws a visual homology between the internment camps and this worker rehabilitation center. Through spatial representation, history becomes visible as a literal and figurative junkheap (“the disreputable, patched-up, painted shacks and building, the huge pile of scrap...the sad men and women”) where Ichiro’s tour through the rehabilitation center evokes simultaneous imagery of the “relocation centers” that claimed to promote the safe “evacuation” of people of Japanese ancestry during World War II (NN, xi). The architectural similarities are striking: as Ichiro passes the entrance gate to the Worker Rehabilitation Center, he notes “a tiny guardhouse” and “a cluster of garage-like, wooden structures” and “stalls” where “the wasted best years” were “irrevocably buried” (NN, 215-216). This description recalls the novel’s preface, where the space of the internment is described as “a camp with barbed wire and watchtowers with soldiers holding rifles” and later in the novel, the camp structures are described as “cubicles” with “mess halls” and a “bunkhouse” (NN, x, 125, 227). Through Ichiro’s movement from the internment camp to this rehabilitation center, a spatial palimpsest is created; both the charitable community and the internment are linked through association with New Deal bureaucratization and social management. The internment, like the Center’s “Reclamation” project, “demanded the utmost of America’s great organizing ability.” In the conjunction between the two spaces, the mutual disposability of racialized and impoverished populations is revealed.

What these “camps and zones of exception” further suggest is an unsettling parallel between the state’s creation of carceral and protective spaces.<sup>212</sup> This history is made spatially explicit in the representation of the similar infrastructure required for mass detention and mass aid. Jason Scott Smith reminds us that the central New Deal agency, the Works Projects Administration, was charged with the responsibility of managing the assembly centers where Japanese evacuees were initially detained, illustrating the contradiction that the large infrastructural and bureaucratic projects originally intended for social welfare also provided the knowledge and means for the mass incarceration of the Japanese population.<sup>213</sup> Yet Mr. Morrison’s optimism regarding the Japanese “race problem” symbolizes the competition between race and class for the attention of New Deal reformers. While issues of destitution and

<sup>212</sup> Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15 (winter 2003): 34.

<sup>213</sup> Smith, “New Deal Public Works at War: The WPA and the Japanese American Internment,” *Pacific Historical Review* 72 (February 2003): 63-92.

class exploitation get set aside, liberal reformers imagined that they discovered a way to “salvage” the Japanese community from the effects of racism. The solutions to social inequality that were found in the relocation of the Japanese brings into relief the New Deal’s failure to adequately address the parallel problem of class inequality. More significantly, the solutions found to the race problem rearticulated class exploitation as an issue of private cultural assets or “human capital,” Ichiro’s encounter with Mr. Morrison illustrates how the humanistic impulse to solve the race problem only entrenches the problem of class more deeply within a naturalistic conception of personal inadequacy.

### **De-linking Race and Nature, Re-inscribing Racial Naturalism**

In the previous section, I analyzed the role of race in the truncation of class politics through the color-blind valorization of Japanese American cultural values within progressive institutional locations. The inclusion of Japanese racial minorities into the workforce ideologically stabilizes the crises in social life caused by capitalist cycles of boom and bust and the damaging effects of creative destruction on communities and individual lives with the assurance that individual merit is enough to guarantee economic survival. Now I will turn to an examination of the internment camp as a space that utilized racialized space to transform and truncate citizenship rights. The most damaging aspect of the internment is not that it was a momentary tragedy of democracy; instead, it is the fact that the internment set the groundwork for the truncation of democracy for all citizens by making what should be universal and inalienable rights contingent upon proof of individual merit. While the camp was commonly understood for its enforcement of compulsory and compulsive Americanization, less attention has been given to role that this version of racialized citizenship played in the truncation of rights that culminated in McCarthyism and remains visible in contemporary detention centers.

As many internment historians have noted, both the military and progressive social scientists viewed the question of internee loyalty as an issue of utmost importance. For the military, the issue of individual loyalty would be used to enlist eligible Japanese American men; for social scientists, the concept of loyalty was championed as a more enlightened method of organizing the camp population than what they perceived as the general population’s racism toward the Japanese. Being promoted as it was as a progressive institution, a “relocation” center intended to protect those that it detained, the internment camps ironically functioned to some extent as color-blind spaces in which racism was deemed an outmoded concept. Hayashi notes that two decades prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, anthropologists had dismissed the concept of racial naturalism. Consequently, camp anthropologists tended to dissociate “loyalty” from “race” (*DE*, 20). Yet this distinction resulted in the reassertion of racial discrimination in the form of color-blind discourse that continued to conjoin “loyalty” with “culture.” Displacing racial language with terms like “loyalty,” “culture,” and “generation,” camp sociologists and anthropologists effectively turned to a color-blind rhetoric that ironically furthered the state’s aim for greater racial segregation under the seemingly neutral aims of population management.<sup>214</sup> John McCloy, the Assistant Secretary of War, was one of the first to bring up the question of loyalty, insisting on the need to decipher an “unknown and unrecognizable minority” (*KC*, 78). In language that calls to mind the Yellow Peril, the modern bureaucrat both evokes and transforms race into an epistemological problem that might be solved. Whereas the

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<sup>214</sup> Hayashi notes that the War Department supported segregation in order “to drive a wedge between the Nisei and the Issei, believing loyalty followed citizenship” (*DE*, 139).

Yellow Peril emphasized the irrational-fantastic unknowable essence of racial difference, New Deal bureaucrats held faith in the capacity of the questionnaire to uncover that essence and translate it into scientific knowledge.

Yet a significant bureaucratic problem in camp, the impossibility of ascertaining individual loyalty strangely reproduces the “problem” of Japanese racial difference as an inscrutable essence. The stress of constant questioning on Japanese Americans was noted by WRA community analyst Morris E. Opler: “The matter of questionnaires and the persistent inquiries about ‘loyalty’ was becoming galling to the Nisei....They met and pledged their loyalty in statements, resolutions, and letters to government officials....After evacuation they were expected to take an oath of loyalty before becoming members of the WRA Work Corps. Those who had been inducted into the armed forces and later dismissed had taken the soldier’s oath....Now, from behind barbed wire, after all that had gone before, they were being asked for another affirmation of loyalty” (*KC*, 80). In the leave clearance procedures that allowed “indefinite leaves” in the fall of 1942, petitioners were required to fill out the questionnaire Form WRA-126 and give personal information in Form WRA-26. Drinnon notes that racism was “built into the application process itself,” since applicants were requested to provide three white references and a recommendation by the Project Director. Copies of Form WRA-26 were sent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (*KC*, 51-52). Symbolically reinstating a racial hierarchy, the clearance committee called the Japanese-American Joint Board “classified Japanese Americans into ‘white’ (approved), ‘brown’ (need for further checking), or ‘black’ (no clearance) based on intelligence reports” (*DE*, 139).

In camp, race takes on a bureaucratic form that in effect disguises the persistence of racial essentialism within a hyper-rationalized social scientific discourse of loyalty. I am interested in the positive function that this form of racism served; the obsession with Japanese loyalty, for example, functions to ideologically join loyalty and citizenship with military service; as Daniels notes, the question of loyalty resulted in the army’s proposal for the recruitment of an all-Japanese combat team. It was for this purpose that a loyalty questionnaire was to be administered to male Nisei over the age of seventeen. The WRA used this opportunity to segregate loyals from disloyals by administering the Loyalty Registration questionnaire to all internees over seventeen.<sup>215</sup> President Roosevelt supported Secretary of War Stimson’s announcement of the decision to create a segregated combat team, noting in a public statement that, “No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of citizenship, regardless of his ancestry....Americanism is a matter of the mind and the heart” (*DE*, 112-113). Roosevelt significantly associates loyalty to the American way with participation in “work essential to the war effort.” In other words, through the progressive discourse of assimilating the Japanese, what in fact was affected was the truncation of citizenship as a private individual choice powerfully conjoined with military service.

Through the figure of the No-No Boy, the novel explores this notion of choice of loyalty as a false choice that does not lead to actual liberation and assimilation into the state. The double-edged nature of the loyalty question is evident in the form of the questionnaire itself. Yasuko I. Takezawa describes the origination of the term “No-No Boy” in the Loyalty Registration: it designates

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<sup>215</sup> Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2004), 182.



those men who answered ‘no’ to both question 27 and 28 of the so-called loyalty questionnaires titled ‘Statement of United States Citizenship of Japanese Ancestry,’ which Japanese Americans were required to fill out early in 1943. These two questions read: ‘Q. 27. Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered? Q.28. Will you swear allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power or organization?’<sup>216</sup>

The questionnaire was inherently flawed for the Japanese immigrants denied access to naturalization, for whom forswearing allegiance to the Japanese Emperor meant becoming officially stateless. Question 28 was also problematic for the Nisei who had never sworn allegiance to the Emperor, and admitting to “foreswearing” allegiance suggested that there was an allegiance already established. The stereotype of the No-No Boy literalizes the questionnaire form itself, defining racialized identity as precisely the narrative form of double negation, which represents the individual’s inability to choose between Question 27 and Question 28, and thereby choose one’s race.<sup>217</sup>

What the loyalty questionnaire essentially does is conflate a racialized choice of “American” versus “Japanese” into a choice of citizenship. Mae Ngai notes that the WRA used culture to gauge the loyalty of the internees, asking questions like, “Will you conform to the customs and dress of your new home?”<sup>218</sup> For the WRA, “the disloyals were ‘people who have indicated their desire to follow the Japanese way of life,’ and loyals were those ‘who wished to be American.’”<sup>219</sup> Through a discourse of race, citizenship rights become articulated with private cultural choice, which as such, could be denied based on behavior deemed improper. The earmarks of McCarthyism are everywhere in this question of Japanese loyalty where citizenship no longer functions as an inalienable right and protection but instead becomes subject to arbitrary conceptions of cultural correctness. Consequently, the legitimate complaints voiced by those deemed disloyal were muffled by the official inscription of race and therefore racism as irrational or unwise individual choices. The University of California Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study headed by sociologists Dorothy Swaine Thomas and Richard S. Nishimoto implicitly identifies racism as an irrational naturalistic cause of disaffection, which is evident in the depiction of internee disloyalty as “the spoilage,” metaphorically equating racism to nature’s destruction of agricultural crops; in contrast Thomas identified those that successfully

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<sup>216</sup> Yasuko I. Takezawa, *Breaking the Silence: Redress and Japanese American Ethnicity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 98-99.

<sup>217</sup> The issue of negation was first addressed in Gayle K. Fujita Sato. Sato asserts that saying “yes” to the loyalty oath would have constituted “a profoundly negative act of ethnic self-denial” (“Momotaro’s Exile: John Okada’s *No-No Boy*,” in *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, eds. Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling [Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1992], 241-242). The novel’s formal use of negation was discussed in Colleen Lye’s graduate seminar on Asian American Literature. Sato asserts that the novel is an internalization of the loyalty oath; so that the “single rhetorical gesture” of the novel is Ichiro’s repeated affirmation of his American identity.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

assimilated after internment as “the salvage.”<sup>220</sup> In the volume of the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study titled *The Spoilage*, Thomas and Nishimoto study forced mass migration as if it were an inevitable natural phenomenon, placing the onus of “survival” on the individual. In attributing disaffection to an irrational racism, Thomas and Nishimoto at the same time elide real political-economic causes for behavior deemed “disloyal”—such as the government’s violation of civil liberties and low wages for camp jobs for instance. In *No-No Boy*, Emi, the wife of a Japanese American veteran, likewise denies the political implications in Ichiro’s draft resistance. Blaming racism for his choice, Emi tells him, “ ‘All you did was to refuse to go in the army and you did so for a reason no worse than that held by a conscientious objector who wasn’t a conscientious objector’ ” (NV, 99). The racialization and privatization of citizenship rights into relative cultural choices results in the effective depoliticization of citizenship to the extent that political resistance in the form of the No-No Boy is not legible as a legitimate political statement or right of citizenship.

In the absence of a legible political voice, the Japanese internees become enlisted in the task of supporting this new articulation of citizenship with the liberal capitalist values of individual merit. This explains the dominant images captured of the camp depicting the internees as idealized versions of the rugged individual or pioneer. The symbolism of a pioneering community is also evident in the official definitions that the WRA in charge of the camps used in describing the America’s concentration camps as a “*Relocation Center*—A pioneer community, with basic housing and protective services provided by the Federal Government, for occupancy by evacuees for the duration of the war” (KC, 63). Framing Japanese American detainees as “pioneers,” then WRA director Milton Eisenhower equated the state’s creation of the racialized space of the camps with a natural occurrence—since the pioneer’s major antagonist is nature and not social segregation. In this way a discourse of nature facilitates the state’s use of color-blind discourse to disguise its role in the creation and management of racialized space.<sup>221</sup> The comingling of concepts of nature with citizenship promulgated in the discourse of internee and camp management reveals the underlying conjunction between democratic citizenship and liberal individualism that was uniquely performed by the camp space.

Not only were Japanese internees imaginatively situated in “nature,” as a population they became conflated with dominant struggles over the management of the environment. Dillon Myer, director of the WRA succeeding Milton Eisenhower, believed that “dispersal” was the solution to the “Japanese problem”; here the race problem is addressed as an agricultural one where racism is seen to occur simply because the Japanese were living in too close proximity to one another. Myer’s prior involvement in Progressive conservationism explicitly links the state’s management of nature with its policy for managing Japanese internees. After the passage of the Smith-Lever Co-operative Extension Act in 1914, now recognized for its racial bias against African American institutions, Myer became an extension agent, and in 1933 he became a state supervisor of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, which approached the problems of the

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<sup>220</sup> Richard S. Nishimoto and Dorothy Swaine Thomas, *The Spoilage* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1946); Dorothy Swaine Thomas, *The Salvage* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1952).

<sup>221</sup> See also Elena Tajima Creef’s examination of the visual image of the pioneer citizen captured by Ansel Adams’ photojournal of the camps, *Born Free and Equal: The Story of Loyal Japanese Americans* (1944) in *Imaging Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and Body* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2004).

Great Depression as an issue of overproduction (*KC*, 18). Drinnon severely criticizes Myer's collusion with large-scale commercial producers involved in the Farm Bureau Federation. Just as Myer taught farmers to combat the invasion of the boll weevil as an extension agent, he approaches the problem of racism against the Japanese as an environmental menace—the solution lies in “uprooting” the community and dispersing the population. The influence of Progressive nature management tools on the internment is also evident in the WRA publication that is tellingly titled, *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation* (1946), evoking Progressive connotations between nature management and population management under the single rubric of “conservation.”<sup>222</sup>

Not only did key managers of the internment camps have a history in New Deal agencies such as the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) and the Soil Conservation Service, but the spatial location of the camps themselves evoked the dominant water and land resource battles that stemmed from the progressive emphasis on nature management as the foundation of both economic development and social welfare. For example, the OIA sought to secure water rights for the Colorado River Indian Tribes by locating the Poston camp on land owned by the CRIT (*DE*, 17). Hayashi suggests that the location of one of the camps at Manzanar facilitated the city of Los Angeles' attempt to develop its environment by encouraging federal intervention that prevented farmers and ranchers from using local land. Topaz, the camp located in the Sevier Desert, was intended to facilitate agricultural development on its high alkaline soil. Siphoned through the tactics of economic development, New Deal social justice efforts often ended up benefitting large corporations: the WRA sold off the \$12 million assets that they built on CRIT territory to others, which was a devastating blow to Native American attempts to establish a sustainable living on this land; at Topaz, the state of Utah and private interest benefited from the sale of its \$3.3 million assets to the detriment of impoverished Delta farmers who could not even acquire the camp's water system equipment (*DE*, 207-208). The WRA “transferred nearly twenty thousand shares of stocks purchased from the Abraham, Delta, and Deseret companies to the Department of the Interior rather than sell it, along with the land, to them [the farmers]” (*DE*, 208). The history of the internment camps brings into relief the buried history of progressive politics' callous dealings with national minorities.

In the state's biopolitical management of nature as a vital resource for economic interests as well as for democratic redistribution, it appears that the welfare aims of equally redistributing resources was superseded by economic rationality. The denial of material resources to these racialized communities is elided by the ideological collapse of natural resources into the figure of racialized personhood itself. Reinscribing the Japanese internee as the model citizen, creating the visual homology between natural landscapes and the nature inherent in Japanese racial characterization of liberal democracy, the dominant narrative that emerges out of the internment is that racialized minorities don't actually require equal access to resources because they contain within the form of their personhood a naturalized cultural realm of difference that sustains them even in the harshest landscapes of economic and political deprivation. At the same time, the existence of “loyal” Japanese Americans functioned to define the liberal democratic subject not as an object of law but an object of nature, a process defined by Foucault as governmental

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<sup>222</sup> The internment's ideological representation as a facet of New Deal conservationism is explored in Lye's *America's Asia*. Whereas Lye emphasizes the naturalization of the evacuation process as a form of rural rehabilitation, I am interested in the naturalization of racism as a social threat that replaces the association of capitalist crisis with natural disaster.

naturalism (*BB*, 61). Just as the space of the internment is doubly inscribed as a carceral and a liberatory space, the Japanese internee is also doubly inscribed as capable of liberation as a rational social agent (capable of choosing loyalty) and imprisoned within a naturalized essence that becomes positively associated with the nature of liberal capitalism and democracy.

*No-No Boy* explores the radical contingency between racial identification and space, and furthermore suggests that the contradictory forces between democracy and liberal capitalism are not only racialized but also contained within the dual identification of Japanese racial citizens with two different types of spatial experience both deemed “natural” to the environment. Ichiro therefore circles back and forth between the ethnic ghetto and the university, the financial district, the suburb, and the VA hospital, literally creating a circuit in the novel between the explicitly racialized space of the ghetto, and the implicitly racialized spaces of modernization. While Ichiro’s circular movements throughout the novel appear to suture together the two spaces through the diegetic structure of a racial captivity narrative with his potential liberation into the space of humanistic institutions, Ichiro’s inability to remain within these liberated color-blind spaces, compelled by a seemingly irrational disavowal of them followed by his compulsive returns to his family home, suggests the additional problem of the character’s internalization of this spatial duality. As I have noted, having forfeited military service, Ichiro forfeits access to the first tier of state protection that is associated G.I benefits. Yet rather than being coerced, it is Ichiro’s psychic imprisonment, his internalization of the racial contours of “disloyalty,” that compels him to forfeit new opportunities that present themselves to him. In this way, the novel places pressure on the notion of racial subjection as a personal decision—is Ichiro simply failing to choose liberal democratic citizenship or are there other factors contributing to his choice? Within his ambivalence and inability to choose to either re-enter the university-industrial complex or permanently outcast himself, Ichiro proleptically reiterates his initial enunciation of negation, continuing to articulate the titular double negation that he originally expressed in his presumed negative response to question 27 and 28 of the Loyalty Registration.

In the novel, Ichiro reiterates the form of double negative response when he declines a job offer from Mr. Carrick, who is the owner of a small engineering firm in Portland. Carrick represents the benevolent face of petit bourgeois capitalism, that “[u]nder the hard, tough cloak of the struggle for existence in which money...had ostensibly overwhelmed the qualities of men that were good...there still beat a heart of kindness and patience and forgiveness” (*NN*, 53).<sup>223</sup> Calling the internment a “big black mark in the annals of American history,” reiterating many peoples’ views that the internment was an exceptional event that occurred with the confluence of negative forces—racism, war hysteria, and the failure of leadership—Carrick reiterates the color-blind discourse generated by the WRA, framing racism as the responsibility of private individuals such as himself who admit to a “heartfelt desire to atone” (*NN*, 151).<sup>224</sup> Yet privatizing racism also means reducing racism to the irrational hysteria brought about by the war.

First Ichiro rejects the job because he feels unworthy, he “knew that the job did not belong to him, but to another Japanese who was equally as American as this man” (*NN*, 151).

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<sup>223</sup> For more in depth analysis of Carrick’s role as a benevolent capitalist in *No-No Boy*, see Daniel Y. Kim, “Once More, with Feeling: Cold War Masculinity and the Sentiment of Patriotism in John Okada’s *No-No Boy*,” *Criticism* 47 (winter 2005): 65-83.

<sup>224</sup> These are the findings of the Report by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1997).

When Carrick expresses that it makes no difference to him whether Ichiro is a veteran or not, a number of negations follow: “He waited for the sense of calm elation which he rather expected. It did not come. He found that his thoughts were of his family. They were not to be ignored...there is no way to destroy them without destroying life itself...If he was to find his way back to the point of wholeness and belonging, he must do so in the place where he had begun to lose it” (*NN*, 155). Formally, Ichiro’s rejection of this job offer reiterates his double negative response to the Loyalty Registration. In addition, Ichiro’s double negation emphasizes the significance of the “place” of exploitation and the spatial contexts in which racism occurs, the novel formally suggests the ongoing impasse between loyalty to nation and loyalty to a racial family, between choice and the absence of choice. In direct opposition to the Loyalty Registration that framed cultural loyalty as an individual’s choice of citizenship, Ichiro asserts his filial loyalty to his parents, which reveals the spatial contours of their persistent exploitation.

Gayle K. Fujita Sato asserts that Ichiro’s loyalty to his parents is a Japanese cultural value illustrated in the novel’s reference to the story of Momotaro, the Japanese myth of the peach boy. The story of Momotaro, Sato explains, is about an old Japanese woman who finds a peach floating down the river where she goes to wash her laundry in her village. When she and her husband attempt to cut the peach open to eat it, they discover inside a baby boy who becomes their son. When the boy becomes a man, he undertakes the heroic task of recovering the village’s money and valuables that have been looted by ogres.<sup>225</sup> By referencing the peach boy myth, the novel rearticulates the concept of loyalty, distancing it from the WRA and military notion of citizenship, and situating it centrally within Japanese cultural conceptions of filial piety and a seemingly naturalistic association of race with biological inheritance, “life itself.” In this way, the novel appears to assume the charge of racial naturalism in order to rearticulate race and nature into the foundation of its critique of the nation-state. More significantly, the myth expresses the geographical exploitation of a village that spatially evokes the exploitation of the Japanese ethnic enclave. Ichiro’s sense of responsibility for his parents and for Japantown echoes the task put before Momotaro to avenge the exploitation of his village.

In a sense assuming the charge of race’s nature, which progressives both deny and insist upon, Ichiro seeks out the “good” nature that he imagines is contained within his mother’s racial definition. Imagining a return to mythic wholeness, Ichiro attempts to restore the racial bond that he has with his mother as if it represented a prelapsarian state of nature: “There was a time when I was your son,” Ichiro reminisces, “[t]here was a time that I no longer remember when you used to smile a mother’s smile and tell me stories about gallant and fierce warriors who protected their lords with blades of shining steel and about the old woman who found a peach in the stream and took it home” (*NN*, 15). Ichiro conflates the myth of cultural Japanese-ness with the biological narrative of natural racial inheritance, attempting to achieve wholeness through the temporal unification of his mother’s biography into a coherent linear narrative like the peach boy myth. He imagines this dialogue with his mother: “Tell me, Mother, who are you?...Tell me now so that I can begin to understand.... Begin from the beginning when you hair was straight and black and everyone was Japanese (*NN*, 104-105). Trying to get his mother to confess her personal history and allegiance with Japan, Ichiro’s methods also resemble the methods applied by camp administrators in their quest for segregating the “loyals” from the “disloyals.” This suggests that Ichiro is working very much within the dominant perceptions of race and loyalty, working through his entrenchment in power in order to locate possible modes of resistance.

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<sup>225</sup> Sato, “Momotaro’s Exile,” 242.

But Mrs. Yamada is preoccupied by the demands of work, and Ichiro is instead confronted by his father, who assumes that his son has spent the previous night carousing with women as he had done when he was young. The blade of shining steel in the Japanese myth appears here in banal form as the father “picked up the broad, steel blade and sank it energetically into the cabbage” that he is chopping (*NN*, 106). Ichiro then ponders his father’s history as a laborer on the railroad in Montana “under the scorching sun and in the choking dust”<sup>226</sup>:

Once a month, or even less, the gang of immigrants would manage to make it to town for the weekend. There would be gambling and brawling and hard drinking and sleeping with bought women, and then the money would be gone...[the men] thinking what foolishness it is to work like an animal and have nothing but a sick faintness in the head to show for it (*NN*, 106-107).

In the absence of Mrs. Yamada’s biography, Ichiro’s point of view uncovers the historical geography of capitalist exploitation in Mr. Yamada’s past. Against the possible temporal transcendence that Ichiro imagines through racial biography, the narrative posits the immanence of a complex time-space, the hidden history of class degradation embedded within racial identification—the disposability of the temporary immigrant laborer. Time is thereby superseded by space; the temporal transcendence in the myth of racial naturalism is overturned by a nagging repetitive realist time-space of the laborer on a Montana railroad defined by conjunctions that point to the inevitable concatenation of events, of “gambling and brawling and hard drinking and sleeping with bought women, and then the money would be gone.”

Gambling is a trope that connects the space of the Yamada store and of Mr. Yamada’s prior history in a labor camp with the contemporary exploitation of labor. As Ichiro leaves his mother at home, who complains, “ ‘We don’t have enough nickels,’ ” at the end of Chapter Three, he enters the gambling establishment in Chinatown in the beginning of Chapter Four that displays “the stacks of silver dollars” (*NN*, 68-69). A powerful analogy is made between the Yamadas and the dealer in the gambling house based on their mutual subjugation by the circulation of money. The dealer is described as an automaton suffering from the sickness of money hunger:

He was master for the moment over the kingdom of green felt...for when the day is over and the money for the day’s labors is in his pocket he will set aside a dollar for his hotel room and give the rest back to the house because his is the hunger no longer accompanied by a stout heart, a sickness which drives him relentlessly toward the big kill, when attained, drives him relentlessly toward the next bigger one until he is again behind the table working toward his day’s wages from which he will set aside a dollar for the hotel room and give the rest back to the house (*NN*, 70).

In American literary naturalism, gambling traditionally represents an allegory of speculative capitalist accumulation, which appears to occur through the occult self-reproductive properties within the money form. The dealer like the young Mr. Yamada is caught in a vicious and relentless cycle of work. At the same time, the dealer’s position as a “master...over the kingdom of felt” symbolically mirrors Mrs. Yamada’s purportedly elevated social position as an

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<sup>226</sup> The “choking dust” symbolically relates his father’s experience of labor exploitation with Ichiro’s experience during the internment, where he worked on a sugar beet farm “in the choking dust” (*NN*, 229).

entrepreneur; when Ichiro returns from Portland, she is holding “a sheaf of bills and receipts” as if to represent her wealth (*NN*, 103). Yet this position of agency is illusory, the futility of the dealer’s “day’s labors” reduces him to the status of a day laborer, whose wages only provide a hotel room for the night. And like the dealer and the young Mr. Yamada who are made “sick” by their labors, Mrs. Yamada is repeatedly referred to as suffering from a sickness, “the sickness of the soul that was Japanese” (*NN*, 104).

While Mrs. Yamada’s sickness at first appears decidedly racial, she is also the most enslaved by her location in a proletarianized entrepreneurial class. In the tragic scene where she drowns herself in the bathroom, Mr. Yamada is annoyed by his wife’s desire for efficiency as he wonders, “Why doesn’t she turn the faucets on full he thought impatiently. Turn it on like you always do. Be quick and efficient and impatient. . . Like a clock you are. Not a second wasted” (*NN*, 176-177). Embodying the biopolitical penetration of economic efficiency into body and mind, Mrs. Yamada’s physical movements reveal the compulsiveness behind the seemingly rational capitalist organization of life.<sup>227</sup> Shortly before her death, she is seen by Kenji “methodically” stacking “a case of evaporated milk and lin[ing] the cans with painful precision on the shelf,” only to knock the cans on the floor and repeat the process over and over again (*NN*, 136-137). Ichiro’s comment, “‘Snapped. Flipped. Messed up her gears,’” frames her as an automaton dehumanized by the mechanization of her labor. The degenerative repetitiousness in Mrs. Yamada’s actions at the same time unravels the logic within economic rationality; her embodiment of the bodily economy of efficiency calls into question its mode of control as an irrational and unproductive compulsion.

An entrepreneur circulating commodities in order to make a profit, Mrs. Yamada’s profits are actually made through the surplus value that is created through her labor. Upon his initial return home, Ichiro finds that his mother has gone on her daily errand to buy the bread that they will sell in their grocery store. Ichiro attempts to rationally explain to his father the rashness of his mother’s insistence on buying bread from a bakery that is so far away. He reconstructs the city streets from memory, “That was thirteen and a half blocks, all uphill. He knew the distance by heart because he’d walked it twice every day to go to grade school” (*NN*, 8). While the route represents Ichiro’s use of the street to participate in the nation-space, symbolized by his path to school, it simultaneously represents Mrs. Yamada’s alternative spatial practice. Ichiro rationally points out the mathematical impossibility for his parents to profit from buying bread by using the city’s public transportation system. He tells his father, “‘Figure it out. Just figure it out. Say you make thirty-five cents on ten loaves. You take a bus up and back and there’s twenty-five cents shot. That leaves ten cents. On top of that there’s an hour wasted. What are you running a business for?’” (*NN*, 8). As a solution to the difficulty of making a profit from circulation by bus, Mr. Yamada replies, “‘Mama walks.’”

It is unclear whether it is the demand for her labor or whether it is her racial identification with Japan that is life consuming, negating her identity as both mother and wife. It seems that the sheer force of the combination of negations in Mrs. Yamada, racial and class-based, literally

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<sup>227</sup> Jennifer L. Fleissner locates in what she calls natural-ism a formal and thematic tendency towards “compulsion” that significantly expresses the failure of modern rational development, namely in its failure to master nature. (*Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004], 22). I argue that Fanon and Okada make similar claims regarding racial embodiment and association with a state of nature.

destroys her life. After Mrs. Yamada's suicide, Mr. Yamada claims that his wife, "went for nothing," and insists to Ichiro, "After a while, I go for nothing too" (*NN*, 212). Far from culturally rising above the destructive path of capitalist modernization, Japanese immigrants in the novel are shown to be equally subjected to labor exploitation and the biopolitical virtualization of power, evident in the saturation of monetary circulation into the metaphors of life and death. The common domination of both race and class by economic alienation illustrates that with the circulation of money as a virtual form of control, power no longer strictly depends on the direct control of the means of production and wage labor (*CP*, 347). Harvey asserts that monetary circulation is the compulsion that enables power to become virtual—it is what fuses the economic and the political: "The common material languages of money and commodities provides a universal basis within market capitalism for linking everyone into an identical system of market valuation and so procuring the reproduction of social life through an objectively grounded system of social bonding" (*CP*, 102). According to Harvey, with the Bretton Woods agreement in 1944, the dollar became the world's reserve currency, which resulted in the linkage of a global economy to U.S. fiscal and monetary policy (*CP*, 137). The novel illustrates the significance of monetary circulation for the biopolitical virtualization of control over minoritized populations as Mr. Yamada explains to Ichiro, "We came to make money" (*NN*, 19).

Not intending to settle in the U.S., the Yamadas accept a transient life, symbolized by the cardboard wardrobe from Sears Roebuck, their lives and the things that they possess are at the disposal of capitalist accumulation and are themselves utterly disposable. They are like other Japanese immigrants in this regard; the Ashidas possess a fifty-cent chair from Goodwill Industries, and "can't afford the bus ride to Tacoma" but are "waiting...for the ships from Japan"; the Kumasakas like the Yamadas "lived in cramped quarters...above the [dry-cleaning] shop" because it was an adequate "temporary" arrangement (*NN*, 23, 25). What at first appears to be the singular aberration of Ichiro's deluded mother becomes evident as a dominant and prevailing condition among the first-generation Japanese, or Issei—a general class identification with exploited labor. Ichiro's loyalty to his parents, a symbolic loyalty to his racial identification with Japan, reveals the underside of racial naturalism—the common subjugation of racialized labor and wage labor to virtual power embedded within monetary circulation. What is "natural" to race's nature is not its temporal transcendence of capitalism but rather its origination within a universal cultural logic of monetization in global capitalism. Color-blind discourse disavows the underside of capitalist modernity, its continued production of spaces of exception and exploitation, where populations are de-humanized, disposed of, and left for dead.

### **Racial Compulsion and Postmodern Control**

In *On the Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Hannah Arendt makes an explicit comparison between the state's assimilation of Jews as stateless people in the early-twentieth century and the mass internment of Japanese Americans:

A West Coast Japanese-American who was in jail when the army ordered the internment of all Americans of Japanese ancestry would not have been forced to liquidate his property at too low a price; he would have remained right where he was, armed with a lawyer to look after his interests; and if he was so lucky as to receive a long sentence, he might have returned righteously and peacefully to his former business and profession, even that of a professional thief. His jail sentence guaranteed him the constitutional rights that nothing else—no protests of loyalty



and no appeals—could have obtained for him once his citizenship had become doubtful.”<sup>228</sup>

Identifying a subtle but significant distinction between jail and the camp space, Arendt suggests that what remains vital to individual rights is the possession of a political identity that is spatially distinguishable. When the Japanese were stripped of political rights and a political identity in camp, they like the Jews became vulnerable to arbitrary state violence. Internees were naturalized in the sense that they were made into a stateless population without citizenship rights, and could only fall back on an abstract notion of natural law; this is an image exploited by social scientists and the media that linked Japanese apoliticism to a naturalized conception of citizenship re-defined as rugged individualism and the personal choice of loyalty. Arendt argues that Jews in this way became a “superfluous” population that she suggests was used for the coordination and expansion of a virtual form of power beyond serving simply the political aims of the nation-state. Citizenship, I argue, responds to the postmodern virtualization or viralization of power in the U.S. instance when the internment camps functioned to associate citizenship with the arbitrary personal choice of “loyalty.”

Implicit in Arendt’s critique of the camp is her suggestion that even as power becomes more virtual, dispersed through multiple sectors of social life so that the cause behind anti-Semitism and Jewish internment camps becomes too multiple to trace, this viralization of power leaves a spatial trail—the geopolitical distinction between jails and camps. *No-No Boy* also focuses attention on the spatial geography of a contradiction in progressive power: that a racial ideology inscribes both overtly racialized spaces, like the Japanese/African American ethnic ghetto, where racial antagonism is thinly veiled as spatial degradation, and seemingly race-less institutional spaces where a color-blind discourse continues to use racial values in the form of cultural differences to discriminate against the underclass. What the duality in space and the duality in the space of the internment camp more specifically reveals is how racial categorizations emerge at midcentury as a commodified cultural identity that participates in the virtualization of power no longer limited to the political forms of the nation-state. Instead, the stereotype of the No-No Boy brings into relief the positive function that racial stereotypes play in a spatial geography defined by neo-liberal economic values.

Foucault notes that the limit to disciplinary power, traditionally associated with a centralized state apparatus, is its inability to fully penetrate the body and the psyche. Hardt and Negri have argued that it is only with the emergence of virtual control, in media and communication networks, that power truly reaches down into the “ganglia” of human life. Harvey associates the virtualization of power with the monetization of capital, where the circulation of money, itself a symbol of abstract value post-1973, becomes the dominant mode of population control. I am interested in how this virtualization of power emerges alongside the historic global assimilation of racial minorities. Yet even as money, space, and minority rights become globalized, a central contradiction in capitalist accumulation remains evident in space; Harvey identifies this contradiction in the process of capitalist creative destruction where spaces must be created in order to overcome space. Highways, airports, and the investment in fixed capital are examples of global spaces that must be produced in order to enable capitalism to technologically overcome spatial barriers, which it must do in order to continue to expand—this appears to be a spatial contradiction. I argue that Japanese racial assimilation, and the persistence of racial hierarchies in the post-war point to the function that racial minorities play in mediating

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 287.

this spatial contradiction as a population that is flexibly identified with both developed and underdeveloped space and more than that constructs a progressive arc between underdeveloped and developed space as a form of liberal democratic freedom.

As important as the spatial dimensions of power are to contemporary analysis of global capitalism and the reproduction of racial and class hierarchies, theories of the environment have lagged behind with approaches that privilege post-structuralist cultural analysis. Edward Soja notes that,

Part of the story of the submergence of space in early twentieth-century social theory is probably related to the explicit theoretical rejection of environmental causality and all physical or external explanations of social processes and the formation of human consciousness....Blocked from seeing the production of space as a social process rooted in the same problematic as the making of history, critical social theory tended to project human geography on to the physical background of society, thus allowing its powerful structuring effect to be thrown away with the dirty bathwater of a rejected environmental determinism.<sup>229</sup>

Due to this theoretical bias, American literary naturalism has commonly been derided for its over-emphasis on spatial determinism. Frank Norris's *McTeague* famously represented the protagonist's entrapment in the desert accompanied by his caged canary, which captured a sense of the spatial entrapment of the individual within a globalized spatial geography. Unable to grasp the relationship of the individual to a globalized space, naturalism yet succeeds in grasping the basic dynamics of this tension through its representation of capitalism's spatial compulsion; Mohamed Zayani writes, "the language of reproduction and repetition at the heart of political economy is formally recreated in the spatial metaphor of propagation and expansion."<sup>230</sup> Thus the propagative dynamic in capitalist accumulation is represented as an accumulation in space. As Christophe Den Tandt writes in *The Urban Sublime in American Literary Naturalism* (1998), naturalism recognizes that it is dealing with a new scale of interconnection of a spatial totality that from an individual perspective is "unknowable." In this regard, naturalism captures the dynamic form of relation that the capitalist system engenders, what Harvey calls time-space compression. In time-space compression, advances in communication technology and transportation shrink the time it takes to communicate across larger geographical spaces, thus as time appears to speed up, spatial barriers are increasingly overcome and space becomes more unified.<sup>231</sup>

This fundamental shift in the experience of time and space beginning with the first global economic crises of 1847-1848, according to Harvey, creates representational problems since it is impossible to represent the causes and consequences of a global economic crisis that abolishes spatial differentiations through the temporal simultaneity of economic collapse. Naturalism in the late-nineteenth century deals with this crisis of representation by deforming the realist representational time-space, emphasizing a rupture in progressive time that calls into question the Enlightenment privileging of progress. According to Donald Pizer,

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<sup>229</sup> Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 35.

<sup>230</sup> Mohamed Zayani, *Reading the Symptom: Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, and the Dynamics of Capitalism* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1999), 103.

<sup>231</sup> Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 147.

the allegorical representation of man's fate in the naturalistic novel of the 1890s is often the circular journey...with little gained or understood despite our movement through space and time....One of the principal corollaries of a progressive view of time is the belief that man has the ability to interact meaningfully with his world and to benefit from this interpretation. But the effect of the naturalistic novel is to reverse or heavily qualify this expectation. McTeague, Sister Carrie, and Henry Fleming are, in a sense, motionless in time."<sup>232</sup>

A related yet opposite method of representing capitalist crisis is apparent in aesthetic forms that reconstitute time and space, as is evident in American literary regionalism, which also became popularized as part of a nationalist reaction to capitalist disorganization that Harvey calls an aestheticization of politics. Harvey significantly argues that the representational strategies that seem the most opposite, the modernist emphasis on centralized power (regionalism) and the postmodern representation of abstract power (naturalism), in fact must be understood as attempts to represent different moments along a continuous wave of capitalist accumulation and crises that demand both unified space and the fragmentation of space.<sup>233</sup> The main distinction that Harvey makes is in the level or intensity of capitalist time-space compression, which he argues has increased dramatically since 1970.<sup>234</sup>

The regionalization of the urban city can be understood as the modern response to capitalist crises; as space becomes more unified, Harvey argues that slight variations in locality render a regionalist edge. Regionalist differentiation functions culturally through perceptions of natural local difference so that urban cities continue to be associated with a realm of nature. Similarly, the ecological principles developed by Robert Park at the Chicago School of Sociology prescribed predictable laws of the human inhabitation of place.<sup>235</sup> Park's theories of the ecological city attributed the concentration of impoverished populations to natural and predictable laws that completely overlooked the historical and social factors that contributed to the ubiquitous production of Skid Rows throughout urban America. In contrast to Park's urban ecology, I argue that *No-No Boy* draws from late-nineteenth century naturalism to render visible the relationship between race and the environment as one determined by a capitalist temporality.

Merging naturalism's usage of racial stereotypes as a visual shorthand or metaphor for an inconceivable global totality with the urban pastoral's conception of an ongoing natural logic within urban space, *No-No Boy* develops a representational strategy that I call the welfare pastoral, which addresses how the progressive state participates in the capitalist structuring of global space namely through urban planning and the reorganization of urban space to facilitate capitalist accumulation and the management of capitalist crises.<sup>236</sup> Unlike late-nineteenth century naturalism, *No-No Boy* draws from the post-Keynesian environment characterized by massive global infrastructural expansion, which echoes Irving Howe's progressive critique of the welfare state that emphasizes how the state participates in the global capitalist world order: "[t]he welfare

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<sup>232</sup> Donald Pizer, *Twentieth Century American Literary Naturalism: An Interpretation* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1982), 8-9.

<sup>233</sup> Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 271.

<sup>234</sup> Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 116-118.

<sup>235</sup> Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 69.

<sup>236</sup> Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 95.

state helps capitalism; it limits the power of capital; it does the first by doing the second.”<sup>237</sup> What such an emphasis on space reveals is the patterned spatial contradiction that capitalism creates and the state manages through what Harvey calls the aestheticization of politics, which includes the fetishization of racial difference and the relationship between race and place. Yet while Harvey imagines aesthetic production as merely responding to external environmental crises, Edward Soja suggests that representation, particularly as it adopts cognitive mapping strategies, constitutes a necessary component of the resistance to and re-inscription of the dominant capitalist relationship between the individual and space.<sup>238</sup>

In conjunction with the material production of spatial contradiction, Soja emphasizes how the external production of space finds an internal corollary in “cognitive or mental space” where

The presentation of concrete spatiality is always wrapped in the complex and diverse re-presentation of human perception and cognition, without any necessity of direct and determined correspondence between the two. These representations, as semiotic imagery and cognitive mappings, as ideas and ideologies, plays a powerful role in shaping the spatiality of social life...But here too the social production of spatiality appropriates and recasts the representations and significations of mental space as part of social life, as a part of second nature.<sup>239</sup>

In other words, Soja argues that it is important to address both the material spatial contradictions and the corollary cognitive mapping of space through which the individual imagines his or her relationship to the material world because the two are interdependent. In *No-No Boy*, the uneven development in space that the novel registers is indissociable from the protagonist’s cognitive mapping of that space. And it is through Ichiro’s cognitive mapping that the novel brings into relief the welfare state’s compulsive ordering of space—for example, through the repetition of the spatial form of the internment camp.

Resistance for Soja must emerge out of a more nuanced consciousness of the way in which power functions environmentally. While regionalism and the pastoral are generally associated with the unification of space, *No-No Boy*’s engagement of the welfare pastoral brings into relief how racialized minorities through both explicitly racial and implicitly color-blind space manage capitalist and nationalist fault-lines, and conversely how minority spaces, both psychic and external, might function as a critique of global capitalism’s organization of space; the novel indeed presents the psychic space of racial nature and the racialized space of the ethnic ghetto as the locus of a potentially transformative engagement with power. The contradiction between explicitly racialized and implicitly racial space is internalized by Ichiro as an identity crisis that stems from the conflict between his belief in rationalizing race away as a (postmodern) personal choice and his belief that race is an essentialized structural (modern) identity that continues to imprison him. The resulting impasse between racial naturalism and social constructivism is represented by the novel’s formal use of double negations that reiterate the double bind of the No-No Boy who is compelled by the WRA to inscribe racial identification with Japan as a personal choice of “loyalty” with the full knowledge that race and the experience of racism is not contingent upon personal choice. The conflict that this creates for Ichiro is

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<sup>237</sup> Irving Howe, introduction to *Beyond the Welfare State*, ed. Irving Howe (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), 2.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 105. Soja cites theories of uneven development in Ernest Mandel’s *Late Capitalism* and Neil Smith’s *Uneven Development*.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

apparent from the outset of the novel, when he proclaims in double negatives the impasse that he faces: he imagines that he chose “of his own free will...not to go in the army. At the time there was no other choice for him” (*NN*, 1). It is made clear that while Ichiro understands that his loyalty to America is a free choice, there is at the same time an absence of choice implicitly related to his racial definition. Yet throughout, the novel also assumes the charge of racial naturalism, attributing Ichiro’s degraded status to his biological inheritance from his mother of Japanese racial traits. Mrs. Yamada is herself the most like a naturalist stereotype, described as a “mother tree” that has implanted her son with the seed of race (*NN*, 12). Sato notes that contradictory impulses, the socially progressive and the racially static, create a double plot in *No-No Boy*.<sup>240</sup>

Jennifer Fleissner argues that this impasse between nature and social life is of central concern for what she calls “natural-ism,” or how in late-nineteenth century naturalist texts, nature itself is “an ‘ism,’ a category to be reconceived as *part* of social life.”<sup>241</sup> The impasse between the social and the natural world, I argue, is explored in the novel as a racialized spatial contradiction between explicitly racialized and implicitly racialized space, which I am further analyzing as a tension between modern and postmodern modes of control. What is most significant about *No-No Boy*’s aesthetic strategy is its representation of this compulsive dynamic of the liberal progressive evocation and denial of racial difference. In *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* (2004), Fleissner compellingly argues that naturalism’s representation of what she calls “compulsion” is a form of representation that uncovers the failure of modern rational development, namely the failure to master both human and external nature. While for Fleissner, women become the embodied site of compulsion, I suggest that *No-No Boy* works through the problem of racial embodiment by externalizing racial compulsion itself as the spatial logic through which the liberal democratic state expands.

The problem is therefore not that racial reasoning is irrational or ahistorical, but rather that racial reasoning is utilized as a compulsive rationale for nationalist competition and conflict. For example, Ichiro catalogues the variety of reasons that motivated the No-No Boys’ choice, attempting to unify them into a single cause. Speaking through indirect discourse, Ichiro voices various No-No Boys’ efforts to postulate before a judge the “cause” of the internment. One voice asserts, “You can’t make me go in the army because I’m not an American or you wouldn’t have plucked me and mine from a life that was good and real and meaningful and fenced me in the desert like they do the Jews in Germany and it is a puzzle why you haven’t started to liquidate us” (*NN*, 31). The novel brings about a crisis of voice where the identification of racial prejudice results in the multiplication of reasons that cannot be contained within Ichiro’s single unified perspective in indirect discourse. Various narratives that attempt to define causality accumulate as another voice intervenes, “I got it all figured out. Economics, that’s what. I hear this guy with the stars, the general of your army that cleared the Japs off the coast, got a million bucks for the job. All this bull about us being security risks and saboteurs and Shinto freaks” (*NN*, 31). Ichiro tries to synthesize these multiple reasons within his individual identity and he concludes that “[m]y reason was all the reasons put together” (*NN*, 34). Although Ichiro tries to privatize these concerns into a single voice, he ultimately fails, considering himself only an “empty shell.”

The text’s rehearsals of historical causality anticipate arguments that have been made by historians regarding the causes behind internment: Morton Grodzin’s pressure group theory, the

<sup>240</sup> Sato, “Momotaro’s Exile,” 241.

<sup>241</sup> Fleissner, *Women, Compulsion*, 6.

scapegoat theory explored by Roger Daniels, and the argument for military necessity proposed by General John L. DeWitt.<sup>242</sup> Colleen Lye argues that the multiplicity of opinion and ongoing debate surrounding the “cause” of internment can be traced to a lack of materialist analysis, a significant gap that Lye’s analysis fills in its examination of the rise of monopoly capital and the Progressive movement’s use of racial discourse in California. I argue that it is important to note how Ichiro’s survey of the various rationalizations for the internment uncovers historical causality itself as a mode of racialized knowledge that in its very excess highlights the function of racial or racist reasoning—its consolidation of multiple and contradictory factors into a coherent narrative. Hannah Arendt astutely asserts that anti-Semitism was useful to the state because it was able to co-ordinate multiple interests and created “mass” support for the rise of the militaristic German nation-state. More significantly, Arendt notes that this is only possible when Jews are assimilated, so that their difference is no longer recognized as a political issue. Instead Judaism becomes privatized as an individual preference. To refer back to the passage cited in the epigraph, with the destruction of one’s community and one’s political status, the individual “is left with those qualities which usually can become articulate only in the sphere of private life and must remain unqualified, mere existence in all matters of public concern.”<sup>243</sup> What Arendt is essentially dealing with is the emergence of an anti-state color-blind discourse that erodes political life through the collapse of institutional distinctions when dealing with the “race problem.”<sup>244</sup> The internment camps reveal a compulsive spatial pattern in the architectural reiteration of identical spaces within, between, and without the camps, and in the reiteration of welfare institutions as warfare institutions. Through its depictions of space, *No-No Boy* is able to represent the constitutive role that the state plays in its reproducing of on-going modern disciplinary mechanisms that function alongside a new postmodern form of virtual control that appears more arbitrary.

In the following passage, Ichiro’s cognitive mapping of his participation in the nation-state reveals how the historical stasis caused by the modern and postmodern discourses of racial difference is addressed from the point of view of the racialized subject:

But it is not enough to be American only in the eyes of the law and it is not enough to be only half an American and know that it is an empty half. I am not your son and I am not Japanese and I am not American. . . . I am neither [Japanese nor American] and I blame you and I blame myself and I blame the world which is made up of many countries which fight with each other and kill and hate and destroy but not enough, so that they must kill and hate and destroy again and again and again. It is so easy and simple that I cannot understand it at all. And the reason I do not understand it is because I do not understand you who were the half

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<sup>242</sup> Morton Grodzin’s *Americans Betrayed: Politics and the Japanese Evacuation* (1949); Roger Daniels’s *The Politics of Prejudice* (1962); General DeWitt’s *Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast, 1942* (1943).

<sup>243</sup> Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 301.

<sup>244</sup> Peter Irons exposes the corroboration between Justice Department lawyers and the War Department in the suppression and destruction of evidence in the Supreme Court case that challenged the constitutionality of the internment. See *Justice at War: The Story of the Japanese American Internment Cases* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993). Daniels also emphasizes that military necessity resulted in the encroachment of military power on the judiciary process (Daniels, *Concentration Camps*, 130-143).

of me that is no more and because I do not understand what it was about that half that made me destroy the half of me which was American and said yes I will go and fight in your army because that is what I believe and want and cherish and love..." (NN, 16-17)

This paragraph marks a pivotal moment in the text, where the syntactic repetition of double and multiple negations is most intensely used; the combination of negations with conjunctions syntactically represent the tension between modern race discourse (that Ichiro is half Japanese) and postmodern race discourse (that identity itself is "empty"). Furthermore, Ichiro's reference to being neither Japanese nor American reiterates the choice that he made not to serve in the military, stated in his double negative response to the Loyalty Registration. The double negation is reiterated and amplified into multiple negations that echo the negating activity of the nation-state, which the paragraph depicts as the origin of racial negation, the "many countries which fight with each other and kill and hate and destroy but not enough, so that they must kill and hate and destroy again and again and again." The repetition of negation here points to a compulsive competition between nations that inevitably leads to a state of perpetual war.<sup>245</sup> The progress of world history through the conjunctions that link a series of geopolitical conflicts is implicitly rooted in what Harvey states are "the political-economic processes that force capitalism into configurations of uneven geographical development and make it seek out a series of spatial fixes" to the problem of overaccumulation.<sup>246</sup> Harvey argues that nationalist conflicts participate in a mythology of person and place that while they lack substance, being what he calls the aestheticization of politics, must still be taken seriously. Thus while racial scapegoating might be included in the bag of nationalist political tricks, its consequences are very real. Ichiro internalizes the wartime hostility between the U.S. and Japan as a private problem of self-negation caused by the tension between his Japanese racial-natural self and his American cultural self. Yet reason reaches an impasse when Ichiro confronts the origin of his mother's racial degradation, which represents the irrational and destructive half of his identity that he inherits from his mother. What results in the form of the double negation is a narrative tautology, "I do not understand...because I do not understand," that creates a logical impasse between racial inheritance and cultural assimilation into the modern nation. From the point of view of Ichiro's racialized consciousness, the accumulation of racialized reasoning regarding the internment is revealed as a compulsive hyper rational discourse that is perpetuated through a logical tautology.

What I am suggesting with the novel's use of negation is that *No-No Boy* works through the liberal democratic compulsion of affirming and disavowing racial difference, and producing and eliding racialized space through the narrative's cognitive mapping of space from the point of view of the racialized. The double negation is explored in the novel as a possible perspectival solution to the double bind of racial inclusion and exclusion as a contradiction between social life and the realm of nature; it is used as a rhetorical device that at first designates Ichiro's point of view and then spreads virally throughout the remainder of the narrative in a way that expands its potential meanings. In the paragraph following Ichiro's description of his perspective of racial

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<sup>245</sup> Arendt locates a similar naturalistic ideology at work in Hobbes' conception of the nation-state: "Hobbes embodies the necessity of power accumulation in the theory of the state of nature, the 'condition of perpetual war' of all against all, in which the various single states still remain vis-à-vis each other like their individual subjects before they submitted to the authority of a Commonwealth" (*Origins of Totalitarianism*, 142).

<sup>246</sup> David Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 210.

negation, double negation is used to designate, in a mundane way, what is, when Ichiro sees his brother Taro for the first time, “It was not his mother and it was not his father. The face... was his brother’s” (NN, 17). Immediately following, a double negation appears to represent Ichiro’s desire, based on what he does not want: “he did not want to go into the store because he did not want to see his father or his mother” (NN, 17). This emphasis on desire also uncovers causality, as when Ichiro explains why he is not planning to return to the university, “It is not the same and I’m not going back”—or because it is not the same, he is not going back (NN, 58). The double negation addresses the complexity of causality in a way that conjunctions cannot; how what seems to be a cause may not be one at all, as when Ichiro claims, “it was not Taro who was rejecting them [his family], but it was he who had rejected Taro” (NN, 67). When paired with an affirmative statement, double negation in the novel often represents agreement between two characters. For example, when Kenji decides that he would rather not trade places with Ichiro, the dialogue occurs in the form of a double negation: Ichiro confirms, “That means no, of course” and Kenji responds, “That means no, yes” (NN, 72). Similarly when Ichiro agrees with his father that he did the right thing in trying to convince his wife that Japan was indeed defeated during the war, the exchange occurs with a double negation that abolishes the dualistic difference between right and wrong: Ichiro says of his mother’s behavior, “No, it’s not right.” His father replies, “I am not wrong, no?” Ichiro answers, “No, you’re not wrong” (NN, 111).

Chapter Two begins with a series of negations that describes how Ichiro slept that night: “There is a period between each night and day when one dies for a few hours, neither dreaming nor thinking nor tossing nor hating nor loving, but dying for a little while because life progresses in just such a way” (NN, 39). Explicitly associating negation with how “life progresses,” Ichiro experiences what he calls a state of “dead aliveness” (NN, 73). “For Ichiro,” Okada writes, “there was no intervening span of death to still his great unrest... [W]hen he woke up... the bitterness and profanity and hatred and fear did not have to be reawakened. He did not have to ask himself where he was or why because it did not matter. He... had said no to the judge and had thereby turned his back on the army and the country and the world and his own self” (NN, 39). Toward the end of the novel, negation has become a norm for the Japanese American. As the “sickness” of being Japanese begins to destroy his wife’s mind, Mr. Yamada is described by a series of negations; he was “neither husband nor father nor Japanese nor American but a diluted mixture of all” (NN, 116). Here negation represents the normal conflictive hybridity that Mrs. Yamada cannot tolerate in her son’s identity. At the end of the novel, Bull, the most violent and abusive veteran, is framed by a series of negations after witnessing Freddie’s death: “he started to cry, not like a man in grief or a soldier in pain, but like a baby in loud, gasping, beseeching howls” (NN, 250). The final double negations in the novel, Okada’s representation of the former veteran as neither a man nor a soldier but an “infant crying in the darkness” associates negation with the universal trauma of human birth.

Fanon argues that while the colonized has no privileged access to a romanticized state of nature claimed through Negritude, his desire still constitutes a “negating activity.” Continuing to negate his blackness, which he realizes is a projection of colonial society, Fanon describes how he entered into a situation that nearly mirrors Ichiro’s, “Not yet white, no longer wholly black, I was damned.”<sup>247</sup> In working through this double negation, Fanon is able to return to a more conscious appropriation of blackness, “I defined myself as an absolute intensity of being. So I took up my negritude, and with tears in my eyes I put its machinery together again. What had

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<sup>247</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 138.



been broken to pieces was rebuilt, reconstructed by the intuitive lianas of my hands.”<sup>248</sup> Through a negative process of deconstructing his identity, Fanon explains how he is able to inhabit a posthuman point of view, neither entirely natural nor entirely machine. Pushing negation to its limit, making it turn back on itself and in the process circling death back into life, Fanon works through his own impasse or “dead aliveness” by occupying the contradiction between racial biology and social constructivism. I argue that Okada’s formal use of double negation enacts a similar impasse between agency and determinism, life and death, disjunction from and unification with national identity that in the end outlines a posthuman environmentalist critique of the spatial production of the warfare-welfare state.

Suggesting that as a pure projection of the economic environment, the racial stereotype remains on some level superficial, Fanon opens a potential line of resistance to control based on the colonized’s consciousness of how power is both superficial *and* penetrates the body and mind, or functions through both postmodern and modern forms of control. Fanon explains the colonial inferiority complex as a double process: first is the violence of economic rationalization as a pure projection or “epidermalization,” and second is the internalization of inferiority (*BW*, 11). As a pure projection or screen, the racial drama is conscious for the stereotyped race because it is superficial in two ways: it grasps the colonized only as a surface epidermalized identity, and it is “[p]laced out in the open, the black man has no time to ‘make it unconscious’....The Negro’s inferiority or superiority complex or his feeling of equality is *conscious*. These feelings forever chill him. They make his drama. In him there is none of the affective amnesia characteristic of the typical neurotic” (*BW*, 150). In other words, from the point of view of the colonized, the unsustainable social contradictions of capitalist spatial expansion in imperialism become consciously representable. According to Fleissner, women’s consciousness functions similarly in naturalist texts: “Instead of either the social determining the natural or the simple opposite, naturalism depicts, most characteristically, the ongoing negotiations between the two that become more visible (and more forcefully strange) in the elaborations of the smallest details of ordinary bodily upkeep that psychologists would later term *compulsion*.”<sup>249</sup> This is what Fleissner identifies as the potentially subversive nature of women’s obsessions in naturalist texts, where the emphasis on compulsive behavior such as “[o]bsessively counting, cleaning, structuring their lives according to a painstakingly organized set of repeated habits and routines...embody the way that hyperbolic forms of control can bespeak their polar opposite, a deep anxiety about the chaos that seems ever to threaten.”<sup>250</sup> From the point of view of women’s compulsion, the cultural allegory of capitalism brings into relief what Fleissner calls a “stuckness in place, defined by women’s compulsive unproductive “back and forth, around and around” movements in space.”<sup>251</sup> Likewise, the key to racial resistance to the warfare-welfare state is schematized in the novel as Ichiro’s “back and forth” spatial practice that renders visible his point of view of the relationship between race and the production of a global capitalist environment as a recursive double negation.

## Conclusion: Resistant Spatial Practices

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<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>249</sup> Fleissner, 22.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 42

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

It is through the compulsiveness of Ichiro's circulation over the spaces of the city that, like Moreau's movements in Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, literally propels the plot in circles; *No-No Boy* points to a related compulsion in racial identity. As the story begins, Ichiro is seen leaving a bus, walking down Jackson Street, and then visiting his mother's friends, until, angered by her aggressive Japanese nationalist sentiment he runs away from his mother: "As he walked up one hill, and down another, not caring where and only knowing that he did not want to go home" (NN, 31). After walking around Jackson Street, Ichiro eventually does return home. The following day he takes a bus to his friend Freddie's house. Disturbed by Freddie's quiescent attitude towards his status as a fellow draft-resister or no-no boy, he again bolts, "Ichiro started walking down Jackson Street, plunging down the hill with quick strides which bore him away from Freddie" (NN, 44). Catching a bus down Jackson, Ichiro visits the university, goes for a ride with Kenji Kano, a war veteran, through the park, and again, returns home. His following adventures take him in wider circuits out of town and finally to Portland, Oregon, which concludes with Ichiro's return home. These desultory circulations represent a cultural enactment of the compulsive accumulations of capital, that indeed occur in the place of monetary circulation (being unemployed and unemployable, Ichiro has no access to money except through his father), in which Ichiro imagines himself as a sort of universal equivalent, continually comparing his "story" with others identified with Japanese ancestry and fantasizing about the potential for exchange. He imagines the equivalence of his position with Freddie's, asking, "'How's it been? . . . I've got to know. . . . What happens after you catch up?'" (NN, 46). Yet disappointed with Freddie's admission of being alienated from his peers, Ichiro "plunges" back into the street.

Next Ichiro seeks to "trade" places with the veteran Kenji, although this is a purely speculative exchange, which leads Ichiro to his first of many subjunctive statements, where he ponders, "He would have given both legs to change places with Kenji" (NN, 60). Here the subjunctive, traditionally associated with legal discourse is made a language essential for capitalistic equivalence and exchange in potential futures. Yet as Ichiro recognizes that the limb that Kenji lost to the war represents more than just "a leg more or less," Ichiro feels a "strange exhilaration" at Kenji's confession that "'there's something rotten in my leg that's eating it away'" despite his patriotism (NN, 62). Race for the Japanese American citizen is an uncanny attachment that produces a supplement to abstract political citizenship, the "something" that cannot be named, the absent presence that "hurts where it ought to be" (NN, 61). In deciding that he does not "'want to trade [places]'" with Kenji, Ichiro negates Kenji's subject position in his second subjunctive statement, "for hobbling toward death on a cane and one good leg seemed far more disastrous than having both legs and an emptiness that might conceivably still be filled" (NN, 64). Realizing that on some level nationalist sentiment eats off of racialization, Ichiro again chooses the subjective "emptiness" of money's universal potential for equivalence. Formally Ichiro's movements characterize what Karl Marx's formulates of the "occult value" of money through circulation, M-C-M or Money-Commodity-Money; Ichiro enacts racial identity as an allegory of capitalism in which he attempts to exchange an "empty" identity position (money) for a commodified one, which in returning "empty," produces a "strange exhilaration" in Ichiro. Marx writes, "By virtue of being value, it has acquired the occult ability to add value to itself. It brings forth living offspring, or at least lays golden eggs. . . . [V]alue requires above all an independent form by means of which its identity with itself may be asserted. Only in the shape of

money does it possess this form.”<sup>252</sup> Marx’s statement about capitalist circulation outlines the postmodern nature of monetary circulation that Harvey notes has become the foundation of virtual control. As Foucault suggests in his analysis of biopolitics, it is not simply that capitalist expansion is compulsive but that such compulsion becomes generalized as a cultural, national, and general social norm, as the compulsive reliance on the market system for truth and to make sense of the world in which we live.

The novel develops the naturalist technique of attributing capitalist compulsion to racial difference by more thoroughly inhabiting the point of view of the racialized subject, drawing connections between Ichiro’s perception of his identity as a No-No Boy and his circulation through Seattle in such a way that reveals cultural identity’s allegorical identification with capitalist commodification. As such, Ichiro’s racial compulsion in the novel represents an allegory of biopolitical or virtual control that from the point of view of the racialized takes on the form of compulsion deeply aligned with the capitalist compulsion of deterritorializing and reterritorializing space. Fanon’s analysis of colonized consciousness brings into relief the constitutive relationship between the racial stereotype and the imperialist deterritorialization and reterritorialization of space. The physicality of racial pain and loss is echoed in the materiality within the racialized body and externally racialized space. As a projection of racial degradation itself, the alley in Japantown takes on the characteristic “ugliness” of race that is both essential to the nation and invisible to it; Ichiro and Kenji walk down an alley to get from a gambling house to the Club Oriental, “down the ugly street with the ugly buildings among the ugly people which was a part of America and, at the same time, would never wholly be America. . . . [h]alfway down an alley. . . to the Club Oriental” (*NN*, 71).

Repetitions in the word “ugly” here parody the expansionist American national ideology regarding its space, where the American street is the synecdochical reiteration of the nation—as when Ichiro claims, “I walk confidently through the night over a small span of concrete which is part of the sidewalks which are part of the city which is part of the state and the country and the nation that is America” (*NN*, 34). While the nation-space is imagined as a “natural” coherent unit, what the legitimate spaces of representation must disavow is the reality of a melancholic process in which space is perpetually being lost, destroyed, and reproduced by modern global development. It is in the illegitimate space of the alley that history, memory, and lived experiences accumulate, and the fissures in modern space become visible. The indeterminate location of the alley both within and outside the nation-space represents the invisible and necropolitical connections that undergird U.S. modernity—the hidden racial and class affiliations that participate in the material expansion of the progressive nation-space. In addition to the alley that Ichiro views in his initial appraisal of Japantown, a second alley comes into view from Freddie’s apartment: “Ichiro walked over to the window and lit a cigarette. The alley was littered with rubbish and he saw a cat pawing through a trash can” (*NN*, 46). Rubbish is also visible on the alley where the Club Oriental is located, “among the forlorn stairways and innumerable trashcans” (*NN*, 71). Interestingly, the third alley appears when Ichiro is searching for a job in Portland after he abandons his dream of returning to the university. Enquiring at the hotel regarding a job as a porter, Ichiro meets the doorman who orders, “ ‘If it’s a job you want, son, take the employee’s entrance in the alley’ ” (*NN*, 145). Next, the alley that connects the gambling hall to the Club Oriental represents the first images of the alley as a space strategically inhabited by the ethnic community.

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<sup>252</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes, 2 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 1:255.

The disjointed accumulation of alleys parallels the novel's formal explorations with negative dialectical sentences, where narrative progression is achieved through the iteration of negation. Like the compulsively produced negations, stores and homes in the ethnic ghetto represent a negative dialectical space that expands internally or by turning in upon itself. The Yamada home, for example, is described as "a hole in the wall with groceries crammed in orderly confusion on not enough shelving, into not enough space" (*NN*, 6). Like this multiuse store/house, some stores on King Street perform two functions, masking as "exporting firms" and "laundries" to veil their real function as gambling houses. These stores are formally represented as an illegitimate supplement in the narrative itself: "There are stores on King Street. . . . The stores are cafes and open-faced groceries and taverns and dry-goods shops, *and then there are the stores* with plate-glass windows painted green or covered with sun-faded drapes" [italics added for emphasis] (*NN*, 69). The shift in description signaled by the phrase "and then there are stores," semantically replicates the surplus in space that is being produced here through the negation of space in an ethnic neighborhood that breaks the city's codes by creating illegal places of business that parasitically burgeon inward out of legitimate ones. Ichiro's inhabitation of the alley in the final scene of the novel revises his prior compulsion to circulate through the city's implicitly racialized abstract spaces of representation. As an explicitly racialized representational space, the alley lacks the progressive technology of the infrastructure of the modern state. "Marked neither by the steep arc of decline nor that of triumph, but rather by an ongoing, nonlinear, repetitive motion—back and forth, around and around, on and on—that has the distinctive effect of seeming also like a stuckness in place," Ichiro's compulsive returns to Japantown embrace what Fleissner calls the revised "understanding of agency in which individual will and its subjection to rationalizing 'forces' appear as more deeply intertwined."<sup>253</sup>

Donald Pizer writes in *American Literary Naturalism* that what persists in twentieth-century naturalism is "a deep vein of naturalistic assumption that man is not only inseparable from the material, social, and intellectual world in which he lives but is deeply and often irrevocably limited in his actions and beliefs by that world."<sup>254</sup> The quintessentially naturalist problematic of nature and abstract social forces trenchantly addresses the pressing contemporary crisis of the welfare state which has led some to question whether the state either liberates human agency and human ideals or, as Michel Foucault argues, only recreates institutions as a form of disciplinary subjection.<sup>255</sup> For American literary naturalists, what is most telling is the territorial expression of this interplay between the social and the natural, how "the material space of physical nature and the ideational space of human nature" are "ontologically and epistemologically part of the spatiality of social life."<sup>256</sup> Rather than privilege the state versus the capitalist production of space, *No-No Boy* emphasizes the discursive imbrication of state and capitalist production that generally functions through the intersection of modern and postmodern modes of control. While race seems to disappear in the abstract spaces of the state's welfare pastoral, Ichiro is still being implicitly racialized, for example, through Professor Brown and Mr.

<sup>253</sup> Fleissner, *Women, Compulsion, Modernity*, 9.

<sup>254</sup> Donald Pizer, *American Literary Naturalism*, 26.

<sup>255</sup> This question is the crux of the historic Elders debate between Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault that took place in Holland in November 1971 (*The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature* [New York and London: The New Press, 2006]).

<sup>256</sup> Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 120.

Morrison's valuation of him as a "model minority" who possesses an exceptional fund of human productive potential. Likewise, in the privatized representational space of Jackson Street, racial antagonism accompanies creative destruction and explains the decay of the nation-space not as a result of capitalist expansion, but rather as a result of racial antagonism. The novel meticulously fills in Ichiro's mind with images of Seattle's changing geography and as a result presents a new model for representing race consciousness that is founded on the nuanced contingency between psychic and material space.

Edward Soja states that "[t]he very survival of capitalism... was built upon the creation of an increasingly embracing, instrumental, and socially mystified spatiality, hidden from critical view under thick veils of illusion and ideology."<sup>257</sup> The reproduction of disposable, negative space in conjunction with a degraded racial identification must be brought to bear on the final scene in the novel, which leaves Ichiro walking down the alley outside of the Club Oriental—the last lines of the novel refer to this ethnic alley ambiguously associated with the nation: "He walked along, thinking, searching, thinking and probing, and in the darkness of the alley of the community that was a tiny bit of America, he chased that faint and elusive insinuation of promise as it continued to take shape in mind and heart" (*NN*, 251). While scholars have interpreted Ichiro's "hopeful" end note as an example of Cold War accommodationism, I argue that his very location in the alley rather than on the highway or the bus routes that circulate the city imply Ichiro's occupation of a politically charged space, a place of agonistic births and deaths, in a time when racial identity was being de-politicized by the state.<sup>258</sup> In signifying both Japantown and America, the "socially mystified spatiality" of the alley is provided here by Okada as a spatial supplement or substitute for a new linguistic referent to signify Ichiro's emerging identity – what is taking "shape" in his "mind and heart."

As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write of what they call minor literature, "The problem is not that of being free but of finding a way out, or even a way in, another side, a hallway, an adjacency. Maybe there are several factors that we must take into account: the purely superficial unity of the machine, the way in which men are themselves pieces of the machine, the position of desire (man or animal) in relation to the machine."<sup>259</sup> The racial minority's spatial practice must be seen as part of a posthumanist project that hybridizes the determinations of racial embodiment and spatial occupation, producing alternative cyborg genealogies that demand the rethinking of Asian American "roots."<sup>260</sup> Ethnic lines of flight participate in the mystification

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<sup>257</sup> Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 50.

<sup>258</sup> Comparing *No-No Boy* with Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*, Viet Nguyen argues that "the recuperated manhood presented at the books' conclusion is compromised or even limited by the authors' flexible strategies, their decision to accommodate, even marginally and ironically, the demands of dominant society" (Nguyen, *Race and Resistance*, 62). In a similar critique, Daniel Y. Kim asserts that Ichiro's positive sentimentalism leads him to "become ready to serve as a loyal subject of what might be termed an 'empire of feeling' that America is attempting to institute in this period both abroad and at home" (Kim, "Once More, with Feeling," 77).

<sup>259</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986), 7-8.

<sup>260</sup> Sucheta Mazumdar, "Asian American Studies and Asian Studies: Rethinking Roots," in *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives*, eds. Shirley Hune et al. (Pullman: Washington State Univ. Press, 1991).

of space and the spatial paradox of capitalist expansion—that space must be created in order to be overcome.<sup>261</sup> With the passage of the Housing Act of 1949, which represented one of the “successes” of Truman’s Fair Deal, ethnic neighborhoods became objects of state reform. Ostensibly intended to make public housing more available, the Housing Act was criticized for its tendency to discriminate against ethnic minorities whose neighborhoods were destroyed in the name of “urban renewal” or “‘slum clearance,’ by reclaiming land deemed dead space; ghettos were reclaimed for ‘higher economic uses.’”<sup>262</sup> Set in this postwar context, *No-No Boy* significantly concludes with Ichiro’s occupation of the “ugly” ethnic alley. The alley provides a spatial articulation of Ichiro’s vexed hyphenated Japanese-American identity that remains unnamed – the contradictory impulses taking “shape” in his “mind and heart.” This concluding reference exemplifies what I hope to have shown to be the deterritorializing spatial practice within minority environmental discourse that aligns it with a posthumanist approach to contemporary modern and postmodern forms of control. The novel’s final reference to Ichiro’s mind and heart must necessarily evoke the Seattle streets themselves, and the paths inside, outside, and adjacent that Ichiro insists he “knows by heart.” Ichiro’s occupation of the alley trumps his spatial imprisonment in the spatial geography of capital with a radical temporality, “the faint and elusive insinuation of promise” of futurity that emerges within and against the cramped space of racial inscription.

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<sup>261</sup> Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 258.

<sup>262</sup> Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 241.

## Chapter Four

### Black Feminism, the Environment, and ‘The Care of the Self’

There are times in a person’s life when to risk everything is the only *affirmation* of life.  
Alice Walker, *Meridian*

[D]eath now becomes, in contrast, the moment when the individual escapes all power, falls back on himself and retreats, so to speak, into his own privacy. Power no longer recognizes death.  
Power literally ignore death.  
Michel Foucault, ‘*Society Must Be Defended*’: *Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*

The relationship between race, gender, and the environment is a dominant theme for a number of Black Feminist writers from Audre Lorde’s analysis of breast cancer’s relation to toxic environments, to Alice Walker’s and Toni Morrison’s use of nature as major motifs in their novels, to Toni Cade Bambara’s and Angela Davis’s more overt politicization of environmental justice issues, to June Jordan’s collaboration with Buckminster Fuller in a design plan for a more ecological built environment in Harlem. The aim of this chapter is to link together the parallel discourses of Black Feminist resistance and environmentalism as they emerge through the rise of neo-liberalism roughly between 1960 and 1980. The Environmental Protection Agency was created during what is known as the second wave of environmentalism that emerges out of the expansion of social welfare brought about by President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society policies. Paradoxically, just as equal opportunity and environmental protection became central issues, the state also facilitated expansion in warfare technologies and militarization. I argue that public policies and cultural perceptions specific to racial minorities and the environment reflect what Michel Foucault calls the paradox of the neo-liberal state—its enforcement of security measures for the sake of freedom. While Foucault argues that the freedom of the liberal state is for example based on the exclusion of racial minorities, a population that is deemed a threat to the security of the larger population, I argue that in an increasingly progressive liberal state, racial minorities are both assimilated into the state and yet perceived to be external to it at the same time; in this context, the paradox between freedom and security is expressed in dual perceptions about the environment and racialized populations as both external and internal to society. It is therefore conceivably both necessary to externalize the environment and minorities as usable resources and undesirable populations respectively, while at the same time, nature and minorities are idealized as the epitome of American freedom. I examine how this duality is evident in the public policies and the popular imagination of the Great Society, and I suggest that Black Feminist discourse uniquely engages dualistic

conceptions of nature to construct cognitive maps that critique the neo-liberal management of the environment and the population in terms of security and freedom.<sup>263</sup>

The issues of security and freedom encapsulate the baffling nature of power in this period—the unprecedented expansion of democratic freedoms through the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965 occurs in tandem with unprecedented violence perpetrated in the name of security not only in the Vietnam Conflict but in terms of the environment with the expansion of nuclear power and weaponry, as well as expansions in industrialized agriculture and the use of petrochemicals in the name of food and resource security, which in the case of the use the herbicides popular known as Agent Orange circles food security into a global warfare context. I examine how key Black Feminist texts by Toni Cade Bambara, Audre Lorde, and Alice Walker map this dynamic of security and freedom as one deeply embedded in environmental and racial discourse, although each writer develops a different methods of working through the contradiction that this poses for African American life;

With respect to African American women, images of race and nature are conjoined in Great Society discourse in two key opposing ways: they are simultaneously idealized in relationship to freedom as civil rights workers and degraded in relationship to security as overbearing welfare mothers that threaten socially to disrupt the dominant values of personal responsibility—freedom and security. These stereotypes further entail a discourse of nature, so that the poor urban enclaves where welfare women reside are inscribed both culturally and through policy measures as a degraded form of nature, an unruly wilderness. In contrast, Black Feminist civil rights activists are idealized as a “good” form of nature, embodying the natural spirit or “soul” of democracy. Examining the narrative technique that Frederic Jameson calls cognitive mapping allows me to analyze the environment not only as a given, but as a discursively produced space that is mediated not only by the individual and collective imagination, but also by government, corporate, and natural modifications to the physical environment itself.

Interrogating the relationship between space and subject formation, between discourses of nature and racism and sexism, Black Feminist literature significantly articulates an alternative political approach to what Michel Foucault calls biopolitics, or the neo-liberal form of power that expands through the management of environments and populations based on the concepts of freedom and security. Dating the origin of neo-liberalism in the U.S. to reaction against President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal policies, Foucault argues that it differs from traditional liberalism in that neo-liberalism takes on the point of view of the worker in an entirely new way, taking account of the entirety of an individual’s productive capacities rather than focusing solely on the time spent on commodified labor or what Marx calls labor power. From this new point of view of the worker, it is human capital, the collective resources available to the individual such as education and life experience, that makes her productive in incalculable and unpredictable ways; this is what must be both protected and managed according to the neo-liberal doctrine. Protection in this respect is understood as the ability to take on “damage,” which is whatever might conceivably prevent an individual from this multifaceted participation in the market economy. In order to allow the individual to take on these risks that might prevent participation,

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<sup>263</sup> Foucault argues that freedom and security represent the paradox of biopolitics: “The game of freedom and security is at the very heart of this new governmental reason” where “[t]here is no liberalism without a culture of danger” (*BB*, 65,76).



the neo-liberal system holds out the promise of private property, which functions as a buffer against risk, another form of security.

Traditional environmentalist narratives align with the dominant biopolitical conception of the environment as necessary for the security and freedom of the population; hence the EPA's "war on pollution" metaphorically frames the environment as a vehicle for securing the population from the external invasion of pollutants. Likewise, in this same general period, the African American population is singled out for being "at risk" or in need of being secured in public policy measures developed in Johnson's War on Poverty, which implies that African American poverty specifically is a threat to the security of the larger population. The demand for security conflicts with the desire for freedom, which in biopolitical terms means economic freedom; therefore, in mainstream environmental policies, pollution, the risk that threatens the productive potential embedded within the environment, is not eradicated precisely because it would threaten market freedom. Rather, pollution is managed by the very mechanism that is contributing most to pollution—the liberal dependence on the "free market" to solve all manner of social problems; the EPA's regulatory mechanism—risk assessment, demographic studies, siting regulations, etc.—are intended to work in concert with market mechanisms. Likewise, for the African American population, risk is not eradicated but simply contained within this racialized population and managed by applying the liberal discourse of "personal responsibility."<sup>264</sup> The goal is not to eradicate all pollution or all poverty in this instance, but rather to deal with pollution and poverty through the "freedom" available in the market system.

I am interested in how Black Feminist discourse appropriates the concept of neo-liberal freedom, particularly the necessity to privately take on damage, in order to define an alternative ends for what Foucault identifies as the biopolitical optimization of life. I focus on Black Feminist cognitive mapping strategies that work through the imagined relationship to nature and to the "real" as a basis for re-orienting oneself in relation to the neo-liberal management of human capital. These texts work marginalization, damage, and neglect back into the realm of productivity, yet a form of productivity that falls under the radar of neo-liberal management. Black feminist texts that I examine push environmental and physical damage to the point of death as a path to a perspective of wholeness and health free from romanticized ideals of nature and the individual proprietary relation to nature as capital. As Barbara Christian writes of Alice Walker's *Meridian*, "In giving birth to children who are both unwanted and unappreciated by society, Walker's mothers also had to give up much of their own lives to sustain their children's. The children know they survive only because their parents committed acts of extraordinary suffering."<sup>265</sup> This suggests that Black women have historically co-opted the life-preserving function of the biopolitical state for those populations, poor black children, that fall outside the domain of life that is to be protected by the state. In other words, maternal power functions in this instance as a substitute for biopolitical control by being the primary force that lets poor black children live. Reasserting control over the body, either by claiming the damaged body as a weapon to be used as Lorde does, or by figuring the maternal preservation of life as a form of power that exists prior to and is equal to that of the state, Black Feminist texts examine how forms of neglect and abuse might yet serve as productive sites of resistance.

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<sup>264</sup> It is this approach to risk management that distinguishes mainstream environmental approaches from what I have been calling minority environmental discourse.

<sup>265</sup> Barbara Christian, *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 215.

In works by Bambara, Lorde, and Walker, I examine how the environmental discourse of toxicity, both bodily and environmental, is used for the cognitive mapping of an ethics of self-care. This prominent agenda in many Black Feminist texts resonates with Foucault's concept of "the care of the self" in the third and final volume of the *History of Sexuality*, where Foucault argues that sexuality becomes increasingly stigmatized as ethical concerns regarding self-protection or care come to dominate sexual relations. In his lectures at the Collège de France on the birth of biopolitics, he relates the ethics of self-care to the rise of neo-liberalism, where it becomes the responsibility of the individual to have the ability to take care of herself or himself; whereas it is the responsibility of society and the economy only to ensure that individuals have the necessary income to do so. This form of "insurance" rests firmly on the function of private property, which essentially enables the individual to face the various risks or dangers that threaten to damage this self. Through the concept of self-care, Foucault shows how freedom and security function within the nation-state, where the individual is free to take on risks because of the security offered by the private property.

Black Feminism anticipates the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) that will later address the limitations in federal environmental protection by thematically and formally exploring the material manifestation of forms of damage that directly challenge the neo-liberal definition of the ethics of care as a private moral responsibility. As I have just outlined, the neo-liberal conception of "damage" is defined as the inability to actively participate in the market economy due to the individual's inability to take on risk. Both the EJM and Black Feminism address multiple unintended risks and forms of damage in neo-liberal globalization that are unavoidable, and more significantly, as I will show, both movements thematize how environmental security measures end up jeopardizing both the safety and the freedom of minoritized communities. By confronting the true consequences of damage done to environments and minoritized bodies, Black Feminist literature and the EJM radically redefine neo-liberal risk and the ethics of care not as a necessary participation within global capitalism, but instead as the repressed underside of the paradox of neo-liberal security and freedom. Pushing this paradox to its limit, Black Feminist discourse encourages working through damage and even risking death as the only path for survival and healing under these constraints, which also presents a strategy of cognitive mapping that develops out of the historic marginalization of the Black population in the life-enhancing and life-preserving apparatus of the state (institutions, public policy, laws, philosophical and social scientific attitudes), what Foucault calls *dispositifs*.

Illustrating pockets in the population that fail to be protected under the generalization of population management controls, minority communities represent the locus of invaluable "fall out" experiences that outline significant paths of resistance to biopolitical management or the way in which control appears to become totalized in the contemporary regime of neo-liberalism. I argue that like sexuality, race and the environment must be examined for the productive discursive capacities that they are invested with in neo-liberal political economy. What follows is my examination of race and the environment as "transactional realities" that function like madness and sexuality to provide sources of knowledge and truth in order to manage the interplay of relations of power, the "interface...of governors and governed" (BB, 297). I relate Foucault's concept of transactional realities to his definition of "human capital," by which he means the sum of productive capacities that allow the individual to become "active economic subjects" (BB, 223). I examine the point of view of the racialized subject as illustrative of a specific historical manifestation of "active economic subjects" invested with forms of "human capital." Foucault argues that neo-liberal management focuses on the point of view of the worker

rather than the point of view of capital and thereby succeeds in managing a greater degree of the productive potential that the individual possesses. Because of the extreme productive value invested in the earth and racialized minorities, they become potentially powerful sites of resistance to biopolitical control; Environmentalist and Black Feminist critique are therefore possible because race, gender, and the environment are concepts themselves empowered through neo-liberal biopolitics. I examine how Black Feminist representations of the earth's capital and racialized human capital illustrate an emergent point of view that counterposes neo-liberalism's emphasis on the point of view of the worker.

Drawing from Foucault's emphasis on point of view, I examine Black Feminist mappings of point of view and of experiences that "fall out" of the dominant paradigms of either idealizing Civil Rights activists or degrading Welfare Queens. Far from being a bastion of security from the dangers of unpredictable economic realities, private property in the works of Bambara and Walker often represents the source of damage itself; not the foundation of freedom, private property is associated with the damage of racialized dispossession; conversely, damage is the result not of individual limitation, but is often imagined as a necessary confrontation with death in the political struggle for life, health, and wellbeing where human and earth capital are not enough to protect individuals and environments from exploitation. I hope to bring into relief the forms of personhood and aesthetic forms that are imagined through an engagement with biopolitics to suggest how Black Feminist strategies of rearticulating security and freedom by confronting a political economy of damage and death might inform future ecocritical work.

### **Damage, 'Racial Health,' and the Ethics of Care**

Black Feminist criticism has been noted by critics for its intersectional analysis that refuses to hierarchize or give priority to just one of the multiple forms of domination, namely race, gender, or class. Barbara Christian explains, "If defined as black, our nature as woman is often denied; if denied as woman, our blackness is often ignored; if defined as third world, our womanness, our class oppression is give short shrift."<sup>266</sup> Because of this theoretical complexity, Christian asserts, African American women's literature in the late 70s and early 80s has "challenged the very definition of nationhood, history, womanhood, community, family, sexuality, even of political movements."<sup>267</sup> And yet, the political and cultural "radical re-visioning" performed by African American women's literature has been largely overlooked in the post-Civil Rights era and is not considered as a form of "political redirecting" or "as an analysis not only of the State but of alternative political movements."<sup>268</sup> I assert that Christian's complaint illustrates how Black Feminist discourse represents what Nefreti Tadiar calls "fall out" experiences—experiences that are imagined to lack ideological currency because they fail to conform to dominant narratives; in this case, Black Feminist discourse is neither the revolutionary nationalistic narrative that dominated radical politics, nor the normative narrative of assimilation advocated by the state. It is for this reason that I assert that the currency or productive force in Black Feminist critique, particularly of the state, has been overlooked.

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<sup>266</sup> Barbara T. Christian, *From the Inside Out: Afro-American Women's Literary Tradition and the State*. Center for Humanistic Studies University of Minnesota. CHS Occasional Papers, Number 19 (1987), 3.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

I hope to fill this theoretical gap by exploring the possibilities that Black Feminist strategies hold for the future of environmental criticism. For example, the concept of intersectionality points to the potential theoretical openness in African American women's literature to multiple levels of intentionality, which, as I will argue, provides the foundation for a sophisticated form of cognitive mapping that might be useful for understanding the complex interplay of material and abstract forces that structure the environment. Inherent in Christian's definition of intersectionality is the use of spatialization as a mode of understanding the relationship not only between race and the environment, but between the forces that structure the local and the global. Reading her race-gender against the dominant grain, Phillis Wheatley's statement, "Once I redemption neither sought nor new," is interpreted by Christian as a confrontation with the very notion of universal definitions of race-gender. Christian adds that this is a proclamation of her "existence prior to the State which enslaved her."<sup>269</sup> Here the concepts of race and gender become contingent on one's position—either inside or outside the territory of the state. Intersectionality is the strategic cognitive mapping of the complex and potentially resistant relation between local and global space as it intersects with the conceptual space of differing notions of race and gender; as a slave woman, Wheatley's subjectivity has been formed in a locality outside of the state, and this alternative formation is a gap that the state cannot interpret as it tries to refashion her into a slave woman.

Christian likewise spatializes her interpretation of intersectionality through the metaphoric stance cited in the title of the essay itself, "From the Inside Out." It is from the inside position that African American women writers have traditionally developed a "feeling awareness" that Christian argues is the foundation for their "synthesized vision."<sup>270</sup> In other words, it is through their depiction of the point of view of racial subjection that these writers are able to synthesize their local point of view with the global forces, for example Wheatley's navigation of the publishing industry. I am interested in building on the concept of intersectionality as a discursive stance that both challenges and re-directs the forces that produce one's spatial experience, forces that Foucault defines as management on two levels—bodily discipline and the regulation of populations. It is through this dual function of intersectionality, its representation of a complex spatial relationship between the inside/outside of bodies, states, and conceptual norms that makes intersectionality a theoretically rich term for issues of environmental representation; intersectionality as a method of cognitive mapping allows layers of intentionality to be "read" into the environment as being productive of a specific spatial experience.

Intersectionality provides a concept in minority discourse that approximates Foucault's own theorization of liberal control as the coordination of bodily discipline and population management, which he most famously analyzed through the discourse of sexuality. I argue that in the twentieth century, race and the environment come to occupy this privileged position, "the precise point where the disciplinary and the regulatory, the body and the population, are articulated."<sup>271</sup> Sexuality articulates two different scales of experience, the local or bodily, and the global or regulatory, Foucault asserts, due to "the privileged position it [sexuality] occupies between organism and population, between the body and general phenomena".<sup>272</sup> While Foucault

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>271</sup> Foucault, 'Society Must Be Defended,' 252.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 252.

argues that race comes into play in biopolitics only to delimit the population that liberal governments manage from what lies outside, I argue that in the twentieth century racialized populations and the natural environment have been assimilated into the nation-state as privileged symbols of discipline and management by the welfare state. As the EMJ most vociferously argues, racial bodies function covertly to manage “regulatory” environmental policy by allowing for the location of environmental toxins away from the dominant population. Conversely, an environmental logic informs regulatory social welfare policy, as critics of the War on Poverty assert that policies dealt with poor black neighborhoods as if they were regions that had regressed back to a state of nature and thereby threatens the general population.<sup>273</sup>

In my first chapter, I examined the coordinated management of natural environments and progressive control through the experience of the liberated slave population. This intersection between environmental and racial politics seems to come full circle in the 1970s, with the parallel rise of the Third World Liberation Movement and the grassroots environmental movement. What remains overlooked in analyses of these movements is how they were on some level mirrored by progressive state expansion of welfare programs that specifically targeted underserved African American populations and by federal expansion in environmental protection, which culminated in the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency. With the expansion of the progressive state, social policies related to the regulation of minorities and the environment increasingly responded to the demands of popular civil protest. More focus must be placed on how to account for this progressive “response” to popular civil protest, or how progressive ideals *participate* in the expansion of neo-liberalism through the biopolitical management of civil society’s productive forces.

For Foucault, the welfare state is a central component of global liberal capitalism; it is the regulatory mechanism that enables the preservation of capitalism through population and environmental management. As noted in chapter one, I use the term welfare to refer broadly to the services and infrastructure provided by the state for the benefit of the population. State expansion often follows periods of global crisis: the New Deal following the Great Depression, the Fair Deal and the Point Four Program following World War II, and the War on Poverty in the midst of massive global civil protest. Yet, African Americans have historically been marginalized in welfare programs that from their inception privileged the white middle class; the historic Social Security Act of 1935 excluded black sharecroppers and domestic workers in the South as the legislation was built on the coalition between Progressives and Southern Democrats (not unlike our current health care bill).<sup>274</sup> Sanford F. Schram argues that social policy significantly occupies the intersection between politics and culture by both responding to and reproducing cultural norms. How progressive social policy reproduces inequalities by reproducing race and gender norms is explored in Linda Gordon’s work on the origination of Social Security in state and local programs for “widow’s pension” and Jill Quadagno’s work on the racial discrimination at the heart of the Social Security Act and other New Deal policies. These studies suggest that welfare policies function to help co-ordinate local and global management through coordinating cultural norms that discipline bodies and regulatory policies that manage populations.

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<sup>273</sup> For this line of argument, see Vivian Adair, *From Good Ma to Welfare Queen: A Genealogy of the Poor Woman in American Literature, Photography, and Culture* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000).

<sup>274</sup> Jill Quadagno, *Color of Welfare*, 17-35.

The issues of race, gender, and nature management converge in President Lyndon B. Johnson's welfare initiative popularly known as the War on Poverty, introduced in his State of the Union address in 1964, which sought to use federal policies to create equal opportunities for historically underserved populations.<sup>275</sup> For poor black urban mothers, the program only reiterated the gender and racial biases that have historically underwritten the Aid to Dependent Families with Children (ADFC) program since its inception in the New Deal. According to Gordon, this program originated in state and local attempts to aid first abandoned women and then widows in the Progressive Era. Not only was women's aid considered a gendered form of assistance, falling under the category of charity rather than an earned privilege or right, when the program became part of the Social Security legislation in the New Deal, it was further stigmatized by underfunding and categorization as funding for public health and aid to the disabled.<sup>276</sup> Meanwhile, Social Security, what was originally called Old-Age Insurance, received ample funding and support as a social insurance program.

Consequently, what results is the stratification by welfare policies of the state into a two-tier system that becomes even more deeply entrenched in this period, an inequity that has been ignored by both right and left critiques of the state. What is significant for the purposes of my argument here is the way in which social welfare, overtly intended as a form of security to protect women from risk, promotes and reproduces gender and racial norms *as productive social forces* namely through the stigmatization of single black mothers as a deviant family form and the stereotyping of the African American community as lazy and somehow causing the poverty and social disintegration of the family.<sup>277</sup> Indeed the roots to the overturning of the ADFC program in Clinton's 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act are visible in the legislation pushed by President Richard Nixon in his 1969 Family Assistance Plan, which was intended to encourage the employment of African American men, while offering little help to women to improve their job skills or provide child care.<sup>278</sup> Not only did equal opportunity policies in the sixties fail because of racism and sexism in the society at large, resisted as it was by labor unions and southern politicians fearing the economic freedoms that would be made available through federal welfare assistance to poor African American workers in the South, it is important to recognize how policies both contain and perpetuate these biases, and more significantly, participate in the neo-liberal privileging of "personal responsibility" even as they embody attempts to provide collective social welfare.

The intersectionality between racialized welfare and environmental protection is evident in the state's emphasis on personal responsibility as the basis of individual freedom and the naturalization of market forces as a self-regulating system. Generally sited as being originally motivated by the publication and popularity of Rachel Carson's eco-critical classic *Silent Spring* in 1962, the federal adoption of environmental protection measures against pollution both responded to popular social protest while re-inscribing dominant norms regarding the relationship between the individual and the environment as one founded on "market freedom"

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 3-15.

<sup>276</sup> Linda Gordon, *Pitied but not Entitled*, 3-4.

<sup>277</sup> The most infamous critique along these lines is outlined in the report by Daniel Patrick Moynihan that relates the breakdown in the African American family to the increase in welfare rolls. See *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (U.S. Department of Labor: Office of Policy Planning and Research, 1965).

<sup>278</sup> Quadagno, *Color of Welfare*, 117-134.

and security. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Carson attempts to relate nuclear fallout to the state's use of pesticides, implying the generation of the petrochemical industry (pesticides, plastics, detergents, food additives) out of the same military-industrial complex that created the atomic bomb. The expanded use of pesticides in the fifties is one aspect of the rise in the use of petrochemicals inspired by the efforts of government, media, and industry to tout the use of technology to guide the nation from the fears of resource scarcity that emerged in the post-war period to the perception that through technology, one could overcome national limits to expansions in population and consumption and thus enter into a post-scarcity world.<sup>279</sup> Evoking imagery of modern warfare, Carson analogizes pesticide use to “the most modern and terrible weapons,” relating issues of food security in the sixties to the militarized security provided by the state.<sup>280</sup> The most significant aspect of Carson's environmental critique is her identification of the paradox of neo-liberal expansion—that technological advancements achieved in the name of security and protection produce unintended consequences that undermine both freedom and security.

This critique of environmental security is entirely overlooked by the EPA's reliance on the freedom of the market and will not be fully articulated until the emergence of the Environmental Justice Movement that is commonly sited as originating in the 1982 protests against the location of a toxic dumpsite in their community by African Americans in Warren County, North Carolina. Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster argue that the EJM's use of civil rights tactics like direct action, litigation, and direct participatory democracy are redefining the very meaning of ecological awareness and the environment.<sup>281</sup> By emphasizing the disproportionate location of environmental hazards in communities of color, the movement brings into relief the limitations to traditional environmentalism's faith in market self-regulation to manage pollution.<sup>282</sup> The EJM, and as I hope to show, Black Feminism, brings into focus how seemingly well-intended regulatory measures have the result of disciplining minoritized bodies by rendering them more vulnerable to environmental hazards.

Popularization of environmental issues in the media as it culminated in the organization of the first Earth Day on May 22, 1970, reflects progressive power's responsiveness to incorporate environmental issues into popular displays of advocacy. Yet federal environmental policy adopts a neo-liberal perception of risk management, not as the eradication of pollution, but the management of pollution through regulation, capping, and market systems. Environmental regulation therefore functions at the level of population management by producing procedural regulations that apply to the wellbeing and security of the people as a whole. What this approach to environmentalism fails to recognize is the constant damage done particularly to communities of color where racial discrimination and environmental exploitation have become institutionalized, which is to suggest that pollution and racial discrimination are endemic to liberal capitalism rather than extrinsic to it.

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<sup>279</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington: Island Press, 2005), 70-71, 124-125. For examples of resource scarcity discourse in the postwar, see William Vogt's *The Road to Survival* (1947) and Fairfield Osborn's *Our Plundered Planet* (1948).

<sup>280</sup> Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (New York: Fawcett, 1964), 262.

<sup>281</sup> Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster, *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 19.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Under the current guidelines established by the EPA, Chester Pennsylvania, a predominantly African American city, became the location of multiple waste disposal sites including one of the largest waste incinerators in the country and a toxic medical waste disposal site. The press release from the investment-banking firm that owned much of the land argued that the sitings were legal, passing all regulatory and zoning requirements.<sup>283</sup> Purportedly “race-neutral” standards were put in place by the EPA to determine the siting of waste disposal locations; Cole and Foster argue that these criteria are not race-neutral due to the history of institutionalized racism that does not fit easily into the existing juridical definitions of racism. For example, guidelines prohibiting the siting of these facilities near schools, nursing homes, and hospitals implicitly discriminate against poor communities of color that have historically been underserved due to racist zoning practices and lending policies and white flight.<sup>284</sup> Environmental Justice brings into relief the need for alternative methods of mapping the relationship between communities of color and environmental risk by bringing into relief what Foucault identifies as the biopolitical co-ordination of population management with bodily discipline, which I analyze further in the following section on Black Feminist cognitive mapping.

When the EPA did involve itself in the question of disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on communities of color in its 1992 Equity Workgroup, it tended to reinforce neo-liberal biases of personal responsibility for “lifestyle” choices and market dynamics as the causations behind this phenomenon.<sup>285</sup> Their explanation that victims of what is basically environmental racism are “rational economic actors” ignores how the free market system participates in the production of toxic environments disproportionately for people of color. And beyond that, it ignores how an entire industry has emerged for the purposes of environmental protection including the waste management industry that compounds the capitalist exploitation of communities of color by perpetuating what geographer Gillian Hart calls racialized dispossession, or the treatment of geographies of color as sources of profit through practices of ongoing “primitive” accumulation of resources.<sup>286</sup> If one examines the history of Chester, a broader entrenchment in racially biased institutions becomes visible: as a result of white flight to the suburbs and the exportation of manufacturing industries overseas, Chester both lost 32% of its jobs while increasing its African American population from 20% to 65% between 1950 and 1980.<sup>287</sup> As a relatively undeveloped area in 1980, it became valuable for the waste disposal industry seeking cheap land with the necessary zoning criteria. The first waste disposal permits were issued in 1985 to the investment-banking firm of Russel, Rea, and Zappala (RR&Z) that together with Westinghouse, formed Chester Solid Waste Associates and purchased land in Chester.<sup>288</sup>

The generalization of environmental risk through emphasis on standard setting or establishing universal criteria by the EPA overlooks the history of institutionalized racism and

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 72-74.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 58-61.

<sup>286</sup> Gillian Hart, “Denaturalizing Dispossession: Critical Ethnography in the Age of Resurgent Imperialism,” (a revised paper presented at the conference on *Creative Destruction: Area Knowledge & the New Geographies of Empire*, Center for Place, Culture & Politics, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, April 15-17 2004).

<sup>287</sup> Cole and Foster, *From the Ground Up*, 37.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 38.



color-blind risks that yet obtain in the formation and perpetuation of communities of color—it overlooks the way in which environmental policies reinforce the ongoing discipline of black bodies through the confinement of minority populations of color to very specific demographic regions that are subject to a greater degree of environmental risks. The EPA’s proposed “war on pollution” reinforces the popular advocacy of warfare as a means of ensuring the security of the population and perpetuates the assumption that pollution is an external nefarious factor that impinges on the freedom of the population.<sup>289</sup>

Just as the EJM emphasizes the significance of local toxicity to uncover materially irrefutable evidence of racially biased disciplinary effects of environmental management, Black Feminist discourse graphs in narrative the damage done to black women’s bodies as the physical evidence of environmental and racial discipline. In *The Cancer Journals* (1997), Audre Lorde focuses on the toxification of her body as she attempts to come to terms with breast cancer, citing her journal entries from 1979 to 1980 that explicitly explore “with a warrior’s painstaking examination,” how her experience with disease might contain within it “yet another weapon, unwanted yet useful.”<sup>290</sup> Lorde’s tactic resonates with environmental justice efforts, and even clarifies those efforts as the specific use of disciplined/damaged bodies as a weapon; she herself draws analogies between environmental pollutants that cause her disease and pollution’s conceptual proximity to the social disease of racism and sexism. Lorde thereby explores how the lessons learned in confronting physical environmental disease might function to help her deal with other forms of social subjection.

As she delves deeper into her experience, unsettling observations arise regarding the disposability of the black body; while the introduction hails breast cancer as an issue that unites all women, the journal entries serve a staccato counterpoint by linking Lorde’s own confrontation with death to the murder of a young black man: for the entry dated 2/5/79, she writes, “*Buster has joined the rolecall of useless wasteful deaths of young Black people...shot down in a hallway for ninety cents*” (CJ, 9). In the entry that follows, Lorde picks up the thread of racialized death in the elliptical question she poses, “*Is this pain and despair that surrounds me a result of cancer, or has it just been released by cancer?*” (CJ, 9). To understand illness epiphenomenally means to consider the underlying paradox of a society that prioritizes health while at the same time tolerating the treatment of natural resources and human populations as disposable. What is most poignant about Lorde’s ruminations is the uncertain wavering between physical disease and what can be read as the abstract social disease of racism and sexism. Ushering all the strategies for survival that Lorde has honed as a black feminist activist enables her to work through the physical pain of the disease in order to uncover whatever truth might be found there. At the same time, the violence of the disease mirrors and literalizes a more virtual violence, the “viciousness” and “brutality” of the discriminatory world that yet exists as the underside of progress. Within the general rubric of the brutality of the world of which breast cancer is a symptom, Lorde includes violence towards the environment; “For me,” Lorde writes, “my scars are an honorable reminder that I may be a casualty in the cosmic war against radiation, animal fat, air pollution, McDonald’s hamburgers and Red Dye No. 2, but the fight is still going on, and I am still a part of it” (CJ, 61). Lorde’s self-reflections create a cognitive map of toxicity,

<sup>289</sup> Jack Lewis, “The Birth of EPA,” <http://www.epa.gov/history/topics/epa/15chtm>.

<sup>290</sup> Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1997), 7. Further references to *Cancer Journals* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *CJ*.

one that establishes a network of connections between racism, sexism, and environmental pollution.

While the medicalization of breast cancer as a disease reveals general population management measures that promote longevity, Lorde examines how such medicalization also serves a disciplinary function. Citing her own experience, Lorde illustrates how women who suffer from the disease are compelled to conform to gender norms that teach women to disavow the reality of their damaged bodies, through requirement of prosthetic breasts for example. This form of discipline is further promoted as a form of care. Lorde criticizes the American Cancer Society's Reach for Recovery Program that encouraging the wearing of a prosthetic; she argues that it fostered a conception of breast cancer as a "cosmetic problem, one which can be solved by a prosthetic pretense" that in fact encouraged a "dangerous nostalgia in the mistaken belief that women are too weak to deal directly and courageously with the realities of their lives" (*CJ*, 57). Instead Lorde chooses to attempt to "integrate" the experience into what she calls "the totality of my life my loving and my work"; this attempt "was ignored by this woman [the representative from Reach for Recovery], or uneasily glossed over by her as not looking on 'the bright side of things.'" (*CJ*, 57). These connections challenge the biopolitical management of populations that privilege the promotion of wellbeing. Lorde recuperates the "fall out" experience of her own toxic body, no longer deemed socially productive, in order to map a productive ability that exists beyond a dominant neo-liberal logic. Challenging the very definition of productive life and womanhood, Lorde rejects cosmetic attempts to cover up the damage done to her body, and seeks for a way to affirm damage as a mode of survival. The strategy for survival in this context entails, as I will explore with other texts, a complex and transformative engagement with death; Lorde notes in one of her journal entries, "*There must be some way to integrate death into living, neither ignoring it nor giving into it*" (*CJ*, 11).

Theoretical conceptions of death as a strategic outside to power have been explored by critics such as Orlando Patterson (social death), Abdul JanMohamed (the death-bound subject), and Giorgio Agamben (bare life). Foucault, like Lorde, approaches this concept of death from the opposite side—the side of life. He argues that in a biopolitical regime that manages populations through the enforcement of life, death is the one concept that this form of control cannot contain:

[O]nce power begins to intervene mainly at this level in order to improve life by eliminating accidents, the random element, and deficiencies, death becomes, insofar as it is the end of life, the term, the limit, or the end of power too. . . . Death is beyond the reach of power, and power has a grip on it only in general, overall, or statistical terms. Power has no control over death, but it can control mortality. And to that extent, it is only natural that death should now be privatized, and should become the most private thing of all."<sup>291</sup>

Alice Walker, like Lorde, suggests that by linking death back into life, one graphs an alternate route to the "improved" life that Foucault locates; Walker calls this "racial health," which entails the "sense of black people as complete, complex, *undiminished* human beings."<sup>292</sup> Unlike the biopolitical management of disease that prioritizes health for the sake of productivity, Walker suggests that survival for its own sake is not enough, that to survive physically whole is not

<sup>291</sup> Foucault, '*Society Must be Defended*,' 247.

<sup>292</sup> Alice Walker, "Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View," in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 85.

enough. She parces a different kind of wholeness that both engages biopolitical privileging of life and at the same time presents a powerful critique of its inability to preserve a cognitive or psychic wholeness. For Walker, life is a necessary confrontation with death, not only in its biological form but also in its socio-political form, which is necessary to achieve what she calls “wholeness.” In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), which deals with three generations of racial exploitation in the South, the novel’s protagonist, Grange Copeland, comes to revise his understanding of survival. Near the end of his life, wishing a different fate for his granddaughter Ruth, Grange contemplates the violence that he has both endured and perpetrated in order to survive, “*He had survived. But to survive whole was what he wanted for Ruth.*”<sup>293</sup>

The concepts of healing and wholeness have been entirely cooped by the New Age spirituality movement of the eighties, which itself was a result of the New Left’s turn inward and physical retreat into isolated communes in the late seventies and early eighties.<sup>294</sup> This form of healing has been completely dissociated from the radical political project out of which it was generated. The political force behind Walker’s and Black Feminist rearticulation of an ethics of care has therefore, I argue, been given short shrift. In her essay collection, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983), Walker examines the significance of wholeness and healing as a vital political gesture that requires one to confront social subjection as a form of death. Walker writes, “I never knew a Movement person (and I include myself) who wasn’t damaged in some way from having to put her or his life, principles, children on the line over long, stressful periods. And this is only natural. But there was a way in which the black community could not look at this.”<sup>295</sup> The community’s inability to acknowledge damage as a consequence of political idealism, Walker asserts, remains an obstacle to the struggle for civil rights. Describing an incident in 1973 when she was invited as the keynote speaker to a symposium at Radcliffe called “The Black Woman: Myths and Realities,” Walker criticizes the inability of conference goers to discuss the recent rise in suicides among women of color, including the recent suicide of “a young Oriental girl” at Radcliffe.<sup>296</sup> Focusing on the issue of “race preservation,” the conference’s privileging black male survival, Walker asserts, fails to take into consideration the damage done to women of color. It is interesting that Walker frames her critique as an issue of “preservation” versus “damage,” as this dynamic is central to Foucault’s theorization of neo-liberal biopolitics. Yet unlike the biopolitical privileging of life for its own sake, the Movement, associated with “damage” and a willingness to be a little in love with death, Walker claims, “called us to life.”<sup>297</sup> Political activism thereby circles death back into life, and yet, as Walker suggests, it is a process that has remained largely unexamined.

Depicting the civil rights struggle in the South, Walker asserts that the “picketing, the marching, all the things that had been buried” had caused “paralysis” and “moral confusion”; she

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<sup>293</sup> Alice Walker, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (New York: Pocket Books, 1988 [1970]), 298.

<sup>294</sup> Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2005), 140-148.

<sup>295</sup> Alice Walker, “Looking to the Side, and Back,” in *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 318.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>297</sup> Walker, “The Civil Rights Movement: What Good was It?,” in *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 126.

seeks a way to emerge “whole” from this experience.<sup>298</sup> This is achieved through an ideological association between life and knowledge and participation in a globalized world: “Just ‘knowing’ has meant everything to me. Knowing has pushed me out into the world, into college, into places, into people. . . . It means being a part of the world community, and being *alert* to which part it is that I have joined, and knowing how to change to another part of it if that part does not suit me.”<sup>299</sup> Indeed, it is precisely the security of a safe “narrow world” that Walker likens to death, “We are hungry for a life that turns us on; we yearn for a knowledge of living that will save us from our innocuous lives that resemble death.”<sup>300</sup> Surviving “whole” entails a related confrontation occurring on the psychic level through an expansion of knowledge that is at the same time a willingness to undergo self-criticism, damage, and change.

In her analysis of the life and work of Zora Neale Hurston, Walker must herself confront knowledge that is painful to her by uncovering the buried history of Hurston’s later life; she ponders how it happened that Hurston, perhaps the most vocal proponent of racial health who immortalized, in Walker’s words, the “sexiest, most ‘healthily’ rendered heterosexual love stories in our literature,” herself endured such bodily damage, rumored to have died of malnutrition in a welfare home, and now lying buried in an unmarked grave.<sup>301</sup> These statements, written by Walker in 1979 in the context of a shifting tide of antagonism against Johnson’s War on Poverty, evoke the specter of an enduring cultural stereotype that morphed into popular conceptions of the Welfare Queen in the early nineties conservative discourse of the Contract with America: the poor, undisciplined black woman living off of the welfare roles who threatens to undermine the value of “personal responsibility.” This is an image that Walker notes, doubly applies to preceding literary luminary, Phillis Wheatley, who also survived by appealing to charity and died impoverished and forgotten. Geographically locating Hurston’s grave becomes synonymous with uncovering the marginalized history of Hurston’s life. In a wild patch of weeds in the Garden of the Heavenly Rest cemetery, this grave too closely evokes the image of the Welfare Queen’s “natural” environment—an unruly realm of nature that has been virtually untended by the welfare state.

The spatial geography of the grave that Walker finds buried in a patch of weeds evokes images of a ruined garden, a degraded pastoral, as one of the starkest symbols of the state’s neglect:

“the ‘circle’ [where Hurston is buried] is over an acre large and looks more like an abandoned field. Tall weeds choke the dirt road and scrape against the sides of the car. . . . I am used to the haphazard cemetery-keeping that is traditional in most Souther black communities, but this neglect is staggering. As far as I can see there is nothing but bushes and weeds, some as tall as my waist.”<sup>302</sup>

These evocative images of the ruined garden become more poignant when Walker later comes in contact with Dr. Benton, an old friend of Hurston’s who helped care for her; one of the scant details that Benton provides to fill in the mystery of Hurston’s later years is her love of

<sup>298</sup> Alice Walker, “From an Interview,” in *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 248.

<sup>299</sup> Alice Walker, “The Civil Rights Movement,” 125-126.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>301</sup> Hurston, “Zora Neale Hurston,” 88.

<sup>302</sup> Alice Walker, “Looking for Zora,” in *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 103-104

gardening. “ ‘[S]he was a great gardener,’” Benton states, “ ‘She loved azaleas, and that running and blooming vine [morning glories], and she really loved that night-smelling flower [gardenia]. She kept a vegetable garden year-round, too.’”<sup>303</sup> A critique of the welfare state’s inability to preserve the creativity of black women, Walker’s analysis engages symbols of nature to suggest how this failure of the state to protect black life might be transformed into a symbol, or to use Lorde’s formulation, a weapon, for resisting the state precisely in these moments of neglect; Walker’s conception of creativity is deeply embedded in the spatial dimensions of knowledge as a form of both damage and empowerment in direct relation to the issue of social welfare.

In “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens,” the garden becomes a poignant symbol of an enduring creative spirit that is passed down by women from generation to generation in a sense undetected by the regulatory mechanisms of the state that remained on some level unconcerned with black life. Nature in this instance marks that other realm, a space on the margins of biopolitical control. Black women must therefore nurture their own creative force in order to survive. Walker establishes a powerful direct analogy between the creative energies of the earth and black women artists who are “driven numb and bleeding madness by the springs of creativity in them for which there was no release.”<sup>304</sup> While social prejudice prevented black women from becoming poets, novelists, essayists, and short-story writers, women availed themselves of the raw materials that were freely available to them: rags for making quilts, gardens full of flowers on temporary-rented properties. Here the garden becomes a symbol of the commons, not the private uses of land in the form of parks and cemeteries associated with state management. These spatial outlets provided not only an opportunity for personal creative expression, they provided a form of resistance to the impoverished environments that these women were forced to inhabit as well as a way to resist the bodily discipline that accompanies such geographical confinement. The garden therefore symbolizes transformative yet unrecognized productive forces, sensuously portrayed in Walker’s description of her own mother’s garden, which she in her own way has sought to recreate: “whatever rocky soil she landed on, she turned into a garden. A garden so brilliant with colors, so original in its design, so magnificent with life and creativity, that to this day people drive by our house in Georgia... and ask to stand or walk among my mother’s art.”<sup>305</sup>

The garden symbol in Walker’s essays, through associations with death, sets forth a Black Feminist strategy of cognitive mapping that re-articulates black women’s relationship to both the physical environment and to their own creative capacities. Nature stands in for the life-enhancing structures of the state from which the African American population has been marginalized in the sense that nature participates in preserving a collective history of unrecognized life and obscure death: “If it is true that land does not belong to anyone until they have buried a body in it, the land of my birthplace belongs to me, dozens of times over. Yet the history of my family, like that of all black Southerners, is a history of dispossession.”<sup>306</sup> The search for gardens and living creative forces bumps up against the symbol’s intimacy with a history of unacknowledged deaths. For like Hurston, Walker claims that her great-great-grandmother’s body also lies missing in a cemetery in her ancestral home of Eatonton, Georgia.

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>304</sup> Alice Walker, “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens,” in *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 233.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>306</sup> Alice Walker, “Choice: A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,” in *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 142.

Walker explains that, “because her marker was made of wood and rotted years ago, it is impossible to tell exactly where her body lies.”<sup>307</sup> The marker of wood provides a visual analogy for this ancestor’s decomposing body that has totally assimilated into the earth, becoming a part of it, and thereby becoming the part of the earth that “belongs” to Walker.

Walker articulates a mode of survival that both embraces the productive power of the individual and of collective women’s experience through a reappropriation of dominant inscriptions of nature as a pastoral protective space. There is a limit to what nature can provide that society fails to give. Focusing on what is deemed degraded nature by the state, land that exists outside the circuit of commodified use or protective state management, Walker at once celebrates generations of life and “brings out the dead.”<sup>308</sup> Insofar as the garden represents an aesthetics of survival through an engagement with death and damage by garnering black women’s creative capacities or human capital in order to resist the biopolitical co-ordination of bodies and populations, the garden does not offer an escape from death. She sets the groundwork for a broader Black Feminist engagement with cognitive mapping strategies that confront the risk of death in order to locate and re-direct the creative capacities within black life; in the following section I will examine how Walker’s novel *Meridian* (1976) maps a new course for the post-Civil Rights age by locating a critical intersection between the violence and destructiveness of revolution and the biopolitical privileging of health and life.

### **Cognitive Mapping: Revolution and Biopolitics in *Meridian***

In the previous section, I addressed how Lorde, through intense self-reflection comes to recognize the productive power in her diseased body as a weapon and an instrument of radical change. In this section, I will explore further intersections between bodily, psychic, and environmental damage in Walker’s novel *Meridian*. The body and the environment represent two different scales of potentially revolutionary change, and Walker like Toni Cade Bambara thematizes the interface between the two as a key question: what is the relationship between the individual and the society at large, between personal and political change? This question significantly addresses what Foucault defines as the method of biopolitical management—the coordination of bodily discipline with general population management. Black Feminist discourse in this sense is the most directly engaged with biopolitics in that its intense focus on the relationship between specific experience and general phenomena directly mirrors the biopolitical mode of control. Through the trope of damage, I will examine how Walker and Bambara, in their respective novels depicting the consequences of political protest on black women’s bodies develop a narrative strategy that utilizes cognitive mapping techniques to strategically engage the biopolitical environment. Both Walker’s *Meridian* and Bambara’s *The Salt Eaters* (1980) take as their protagonist, young black women struggling to redefine the strategy and the purpose of struggle in the post-Civil Rights era. In *Meridian*, the protagonist, Meridian Hill, pushes herself to the brink of physical and psychic destruction, trying single handedly to carry on the civil rights message of non-violent protest. Velma Henry, the protagonist in *The Salt Eaters*, drives herself to multiple attempts at suicide in her similar frustrations with post-Civil Rights

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>308</sup> Grace Hong uses the term “bring out your dead” in her analysis of Black Feminist institutionalization in “‘The Future of Our Worlds’: Black Feminism and the Politics of Knowledge in the University under Globalization” in *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 13, no.2 (2008): 95-115.

movement culture. Both novels thematize the importance of working through the consequences of facing the psychic, physical, and social risks that were taken on in the sixties by developing a strategy of caring for oneself in such a way that facilitates ongoing political struggle. By taking on the theme of self-care, these texts reiterate the biopolitical imperative to protect oneself from risk, yet this imperative is redirected so that the aim is not economic freedom and well-being but rather revolutionary change. In this section I will focus on how *Meridian* schematizes the mediation of seemingly opposing forces of revolutionary change and the neo-liberal protection of life from risk.

Ursula K. Heise asserts that contemporary perceptions of environmental risk emerged through the sixties and early seventies. This emerging notion of risk discourse coming out of the Chicago School of Geography related technological development to ecological risk scenarios.<sup>309</sup> While Heise distinguishes this thread of risk assessment from earlier perceptions of economic and political risk developed in the mid-eighteenth century, I argue that the two strains are more closely related through the rise of neo-liberalism. Most popularly understood as the specific economic policies pursued by the Regan and Thatcher administrations in the early eighties, neo-liberalism according to Foucault can be traced to the discourse of risk that emerges in reaction to the New Deal in the U.S. For Foucault, neo-liberalism promulgates a discourse of risk precisely because it demands that

society as a whole will not be asked to guarantee individuals against risk, whether these are individual risks, like illness or accidents, or collective risks, like damage for example; society will not be asked to guarantee individuals against these risks. Society, or rather the economy, will merely be asked to see to it that every individual has sufficient income to be able...to ensure himself against existing risks, or the risks of life, the inevitability of old age and death, on the basis of his own private reserves (*BB*, 140).

Foucault asserts that liberal economic principles are in this way discursively generalized in politics and social life; as evidence he cites the Chicago School of Economics' American Enterprise Institute, which examined governmental practices of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the 1960s through the 1970s in terms of a cost-benefit analysis.<sup>310</sup> Heise similarly locates the origin of environmental risk analysis in the 1970s to the emergence of psychometrically oriented research, which focused on how the individual perceives and takes on risks; this type of analysis determines the values an individual gives to risk. Heise uses the example that second hand smoke is perceived to be more dangerous than bad nutrition, which suggests that risks that are voluntarily taken on are perceived to be less risky than involuntarily imposed risks.<sup>311</sup> It is this emphasis on the point of view of the person at risk that defines neo-liberal biopolitics.

A significant shift occurs in point of view, according to Foucault, with the rise of neo-liberalism. “[N]eo-liberals tried to address the problem of work from the point of view of the person who decides to work rather than the point of view of capital or of economic mechanisms,” Foucault asserts, “[W]e move over to the side of the individual subject...inasmuch as...we can approach it through the angle, the aspect, the kind of network of intelligibility of his behavior as economic behavior” (*BB*, 252). What is significant is that “the point of view of the

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<sup>309</sup> Heise, *Sense of Place*, 124.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

worker” is assumed beyond the abstraction and objectification of labor power; the worker is recognized as “an active economic subject,” in the sense that biopolitics takes into consideration “all those physical and psychological factors which make someone able to earn this or that wage” (BB, 223-224). Labor in this instance is not a commodity that is used up in exchange, “from the worker’s point of view labor comprises a capital, that is to say it is an ability, a skill; as they say: it is a ‘machine’” (BB, 224). The worker is therefore seen to be more of an “enterprise” comprised of human capital, using all his or her productive capacities as if they functioned like an “ability-machine” (BB, 226). For Foucault, neo-liberal risk is bound up in this new emphasis on the point of view of the worker, who as an enterprise, is able to take on individual risk.

Heise significantly notes that it is precisely point of view in narrative that potentially expands the collective capacity to comprehend the new threats of global environmental risk, what she calls a “world risk society.” Through her analysis of Ulrich Beck’s “Cosmopolitan Manifesto,” Heise asserts that shared risk exposure necessitates a new form of perceiving globality that she calls “eco-cosmopolitanism.”<sup>312</sup> Analyzing modernist aesthetics, specifically collage, Heise suggests that new methods of representing global risk are central to the future of environmental politics. Similarly Foucault argues that the different scales of power become less relevant than point of view, “a method of decipherment which may be valid for the whole scale, what ever its size” (BB, 186). In other words, what is important is not so much the relations of production, and relations between micro- and macro-powers, but rather the forces of production, and more specifically, the individual as a productive-unit so that the object of both local and global management is the productive force conceptualized from the point of view of the individual. Drawing from this observation, I suggest that cognitive mapping becomes a significant narrative device in Black Feminist attempts to represent the productive force of black women’s lives from the point of view of various characters who attempt to understand their own productive potential within and against a globalized neo-liberal environment. In other words, Black Feminist literature suggests that, as biopolitics assumes, the point of view of the individual is capable of conceptualizing abstract global dynamics as they intersect with local experience.

*Meridian* formally attempts to reveal a pattern of overlapping forces of influence that shape the environment and intersect with subject formation. The importance of this project is noted in the title itself, which signifies multiple methods of geographical referencing; the term “meridian” is not only the name of the novel’s protagonist, a point of view that excavates the history of black women’s struggle, but meridian also refers to the multiple forces structuring time and space. Walker is careful to provide definitions of the ways in which the novel considers the term, some of the definitions include:

1. The highest apparent point reached by a heavenly body in its course. 2(a) the highest point of power... (b) the middle period of one’s life, regarded as the high point of health... 3. noon. 4. in astronomy, an imaginary great circle of the celestial sphere passing through the poles of the heavens and the zenith and nadir of any given point, and cutting the equator at right angles. 5. in geography, (a) a great circle of the earth passing through the geographical poles and any given point on the earth’s surface; (b) the half of such a circle between the poles; (c) any of the

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 9-14.



lines of longitude running north and south on a globe or map, representing such a circle or half-circle.<sup>313</sup>

These definitions are followed by the adjectival form of the term, “of or at noon...of the position of power of the sun at noon,” “of or passing through the highest point in the daily course of any heavenly body,” and a rare use of the term refers to “southern.” Thus, one’s method of geographical referencing evokes different time-spaces not only as locational markers but also as modifiers that mark qualitative differences within that time and space. The definitions of the word meridian refer to perspectival nuances in temporal and spatial relations of power: the highest point of power is a temporal marker (midday), it is a geographical marker, (half circle of the earth’s surface), and it is a metaphysical or spiritual marker (celestial sphere). Reference to the South suggests the geographical-historical significance of the geopolitical space of the South for the Civil Rights movement.

Most significantly, the term meridian allows the novel to map a new geography that is attentive to the way in which temporal, spatial, and spiritual or ideological experience function simultaneously to shape one’s point of view. The novel thereby presents a multi-dimensional cognitive map of experience that graphs the intersectional relationship between time, material space, and imaginary space in both the environment and the self. As the epithet to the novel by Black Elk attests, circles in Native American culture represents the intersection between spiritual life and external reality: “I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch....A people’s dream died there. It was a beautiful dream...the nation’s hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.” The “broken hoop” refers both to a spiritual force that has been broken and to the actual destruction of life that has occurred at this massacre. In this instance, one can see how the environment is used from Black Elk’s point of view in Native American spirituality to spatially map the destruction to the productive force of Native American life—the ability to “dream” and imagine new realities and to regenerate actual life (symbolized by massacred mothers and children)—are cognitively mapped onto a virtual landscape in which the “hoop” or an imagined circumference has been destroyed and the metaphoric “sacred tree is dead.”

Anne M. Downey argues that *Meridian* utilizes the motif of the “hoop” to suggest how Meridian, similar to the spiritual leader Black Elk, seeks to heal the broken power of the Civil Rights movement through a circular return to wholeness.<sup>314</sup> Integrated into the structure of the novel itself, circularity is thematized through the diegetic movement from present to past and back into the present.<sup>315</sup> Circularity at the same time, according to Downey, functions to perform for the reader the process of enlarging one’s perspective, what Black Elk as a spiritual guide performs for his community.<sup>316</sup> Meridian, as one of the graphical meridians, at the same time transforms her own point of view as she performs this spiritually healing act. While evocations of spiritual healing have often been criticized for their inability to address real material conditions, I argue that what remains overlooked is the way in which spirituality as a mode of interpreting history, provides an alternative method of mapping the effects of the collective

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<sup>313</sup> Alice Walker, *Meridian* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976). Future references are to this edition parenthetically in the text as *M*.

<sup>314</sup> Anne M. Downey, “‘A Broken and Bloody Hoop’: The Intertextuality of *Black Elk Speaks* and Alice Walker’s *Meridian*,” *MELUS* 19 (fall 1994): 37-45.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

imagination on the perception of “real” space—in this instance, deciphering patterns that uncover the interrelationship between something like symbolic and real space: the sacred “hoop” at the site of a massacre that immortalizes the lives of the dead; likewise the visionary ideals of civil rights activists that have been destroyed by actual violence are recontained in the form of spiritualism. It is in these symbolic spaces that the productive force of individual lives is on an ideological level preserved and redirected.

Yet the problem with this kind of spiritual essentialization is its participation in the dominant culture’s fetishization of both African American and Native American culture as functioning on a level that is apolitical and ahistorical in its proximity to nature and the land. *Meridian* vehemently criticizes the romanticization of black folk culture, particularly through the character Lynn, a Jewish civil rights worker who imagines that black life in the South is a form of art that preserves a form of social life now lost (*M*, 136). This attitude is further attributed to the mediatized perpetuation of racial stereotypes, described when Lynn and Meridian seek to reconcile their relationship: “As they sat they watched a television program. One of those Southern epics about the relationship of the Southern white man to madness, and the closeness of the Southern black man to the land. It did not delve into the women’s problems, black or white” (*M*, 189). Identifying with one another as women, Lynn and Meridian seek to step outside of the dominant cultural-political mapping of the South as the romantic relationship between man and nature, and black and white men.

Alan Nadel notes this rejection of aestheticization in *Meridian* reflects the activist’s point of view of art as a distraction from political action; in this vein, the activist in the novel destroy nature as an artifact, most evident in their destruction of The Sojourner, a magnolia tree that grows on the Saxon College campus that Meridian attends.<sup>317</sup> In this instance, the activist’s advocacy of violence directly contradicts the association of creativity and art with life. From Meridian’s point of view, The Sojourner is a sacred testament to the obliterated history of black women’s lives in the South. When her activist friend Anne-Marion expresses her desire to “wreck the place,” meaning the campus and the institutions of Saxon College, Meridian replies, “You’d have to wreck me first” (*M*, 31). Throughout the novel, Meridian struggles with these two seemingly opposing forces—her desire to be an agent of change and her desire to preserve her life including the lives of her predecessors that are symbolically memorialized by The Sojourner. What immediately follows this brief dialogue between Anne-Marion and Meridian is a history of the tree itself, originally planted by a slave on what was once Saxon plantation. We learn the slave’s name, Louvinie, and her West African roots that endowed her with a gift for storytelling. We also learn that it is Louvinie’s actual tongue, which had been cut out for its telling of a tale that resulted in the death of the plantation owner’s son, that is fabled to nourish the tree and give it its magical properties; these properties coincide with Louvinie’s own personal traits—the magical capacity to tell stories and make music (*M*, 34).

The history of The Sojourner is then brought closer to the present; in the 1920s a woman known as Fast Mary secretly bore a child and proceeded to chop the infant into pieces and dispose of it in the toilet. After being caught for her crime, Fast Mary was confined to a room at her parents home, where she committed suicide. The May Dance at Saxon College commemorates Fast Mary’s life by performing a dance around The Sojourner (*M*, 35). Then, contemporaneous with Meridian’s time at Saxon, there is the story of Wile Childe, a young

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<sup>317</sup> Alan Nadel, “Reading the Body: Alice Walker’s *Meridian* and the Archeology of the Self,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 34 (spring 1988): 55-68.

vagabond girl who rummages through the community's trash for food and clothing. After she is killed, the women at Saxon seek to give her a funeral at the college chapel. Once denied access, the women as if by collective consent, carry Wile Child's body to The Sojourner. Yet the following night, in an outburst of rage, the women activists riot and end up destroying the magnolia tree (*M*, 39). While the revolutionary current in the activists at Saxon leads to the destruction of The Sojourner, the tree itself memorializes the lives of radical black women. Meridian's desire to preserve the tree and to commemorate the death of civil rights workers with the planting of a shrub is the most basic expression of her desire to protect and preserve life.

The environmental imagination, or cognitive mapping of the environment, is essential to Meridian's success in working through the contradiction between revolutionary violence and the preservation of life; in co-opting the ownership of The Sojourner through her claiming of the marginalized stories related to it, Meridian takes possession of a central symbol of the Saxon College campus in the sense that The Sojourner has been preserved by the college as a symbol of its enduring institutional values—what one might call the college campus pastoral that is universally recognizable. The campus is thus described on the day of Wile Child's funeral:

A dampness peculiar to the climate was turned lightly warm by the clear sunshine, and blossoms on apple and pear and cherry trees lifted the skeptical eye in wonder and peace. Running through so much green, the road was as white as an egg, as if freshly scrubbed, the red brick buildings, older than anyone still alive, sparkled in the sun" (*M*, 30-31).

Receiving a scholarship from a wealthy philanthropic family in the North, Meridian is given the opportunity, as the owner of the town's guano plant, Mr. Yaetson, puts it, "to be representing the kind of bright 'product' that his plant could 'produce'" (*M*, 83). In this scene that evokes Ralph Ellison's description of the education of the invisible man, it is explained that Meridian's liberal donors are moved by images of violence being endured by civil rights workers; these liberal values are also translated into the family's endowment of Saxon College for three generations. Both the pastoral imagery and the nature of Meridian's scholarship represent the life-preserving, by which I mean progressive, strain in neo-liberalism.

Yet the security that Saxon College provides for its students comes with the price of conformity to racial and gender norms. Women like Wile Child are therefore denied access, symbolized by the college's refusal to allow the students to hold funeral services at the campus chapel, because "it is assumed that Saxon young ladies were, by definition, virgins" and "[t]hey were treated always as if they were thirteen years old" (*M*, 93). Modeled on a girl's finishing school, so that "wherever she would later find herself in the world, [she] was to be *accepted* as an equal because she knew and practiced all the social rules," Saxon College preserves the lives of young black women and channels their energies into socially acceptable productive molds (*M*, 94). The Sojourner is preserved on the college campus as a symbol of its life-enhancing humanistic purpose.

Yet Meridian's point of view reveals an alternative definition of the Sojourner that redirects its symbolic function, using the tree as a mediatory symbol that preserves the life stories of deviant Saxon women, which at the same time represents the violence of change demanded by the women who destroy the tree. Near the end of the novel, The Sojourner is depicted as a stump sprouting a new branch, a symbol of rebirth that mirrors Meridian's own death and rebirth; the tree thereby synthesizes the conflict between radical violence and the liberal preservation of life within the organic metaphor of new life emerging out of destruction. This is achieved through nature's ideological association with an ecological or cyclical time-space that is self-contained or

self-sufficient and conceivably functioning alongside the biopolitical preservation of life. The key symbols of nature, The Sojourner and the Sacred Serpent Mound, an ancient Native American burial ground on Meridian's father's property, are symbols irrevocably bound to death and the actual burial of human bodies or parts of bodies: Louvinie's tongue, Fast Mary's and her child's death, Wile Child's and her child's death, and the dead bodies of Native Americans. These symbols of nature therefore have a distinctly gothic quality, which is a narrative form that binds pastoral imagery with images of death. Heise asserts that the gothic is one of the literary genres that represent what Lawrence Buell has identified as "toxic discourse," which according to Buell arises from the "perceived threat of environmental hazard due to chemical modification by human agency."<sup>318</sup> Toxic discourse is problematic for Buell because it suggests a return to a "risk-free" environment through a process of detoxification or return to premodern life.<sup>319</sup> Heise proposes an alternative aesthetic model that engages the perpetual presence of environmental risk. This is precisely the strategy explored by Lorde, who examines her own toxic body in order to face the dangers of race and gender identification head on. I assert that Walker's use of gothicism is more akin Heise's model and to Edgar Allen Poe than more traditional uses of gothic to depict a polluting element in a community; Poe's gothic arabesques engage an insoluble opposition between life and death as two poles that present a perpetual spiral, as in "The Pit an the Pendulum" and "Leigia."

Likewise in *Meridian*, as well as in the other works that I examine here, death is precisely the historical constant that has been buried and pushed aside in a biopolitical state that cannot recognize death. To uncover the buried histories of marginalized populations, to "bring out the dead," is necessarily to go against the grain of the biopolitical preservation of life. In the case of the Sacred Serpent Mound, it is Meridian's father who stands witness to the genocide that has been historically marginalized and materially effaced from the view. From the beginning her father is associated with death, and his is the voice that prevents her from being able to kill for justice: "It was her father's voice that moved her, that voice that could come only form the life he lived. A life of withdrawal from the world, a life of constant awareness of death.... 'The Indians were living right here, in Georgia,' said her father, 'they had a town, an alphabet, a newspaper. They were going about their business, enjoying life... It was the same with them all over the country, and in Mexico, South America... doesn't this say anything to you?'" (*M*, 16).

This awareness of buried history coincides with Mr. Hill's ownership of property given to his ancestors after the Civil War, known as the Sacred Serpent Mound, which has been the burial ground for Native Americans in the region for thousands of years. Which is to say that, uncovering buried history is quite literally bound to nature and what is literally buried in the land and what is perceived to be the private property that purportedly "guarantees" the freedom of liberated slave. Just as this rocky, hilly, uncultivable land is the figurative "death" of his predecessors wrapped in a gesture of good will from the government, the Sacred Serpent represents the literal burial ground of dispossessed Native Americans. Mr. Hill enacts an important alternative cognitive mapping of space, reinscribing the history and function of his private property intended to enable him to become a free economic citizen. Perpetually poring over old maps, "yellowed and cracked with frayed edges, that showed the ancient settlements of Indians in North America," Mr. Hill evokes the alternative geographies that "bring out the dead"

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<sup>318</sup> Heise, *Sense of Place*, 139.

<sup>319</sup> Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2001), 45.

within the land intended to give him freedom and security. The Sojourner and The Sacred Serpent Mound are environmental symbols of the risks taken on by and the damage done to African American and Native American populations.

As an artifact these natural symbols preserve what Walter Benjamin calls proverbial knowledge, which he argues is like an artifactual object in the sense that it represents “an ideogram of a story,” a fragment of history that is preserved in a moment of crisis when the art of storytelling was vanishing.<sup>320</sup> Benjamin writes, “A proverb, one might say, is a ruin which stands on the site of an old story and in which a moral twines about a happening like ivy around a wall.”<sup>321</sup> The story embodies and materializes a time-space that no longer exists and yet comes alive in the present with each telling. Likewise, the formal relationship to space established in the stories of *The Sojourner* and the Sacred Serpent themselves reiterate an artifactual time-space in which the past remains alive but buried in the present. I will push this point further to draw more specific correspondences between the function of the nature-artifact and the story as artifact, and its relevance for Walker’s specific mapping of the intersection between revolutionary and biopolitical forces. Nature is not only a thematic motif, but structurally, a natural time-space is evoked in the mechanism of storytelling; what Nadel identifies as *Meridian*’s archeological structure, its narrative circling around stories themselves as artifacts to be unearthed, privileges a naturalistic perception of black women’s histories as somehow preserved by nature in the present.<sup>322</sup> Rather than eliding history, I propose to show how the novel’s artifactual treatment of nature facilitates an alternative chronicling of women’s lives; stories themselves represent the agonistic expansion of *Meridian*’s point of view as a form of “natural” growth that like *The Sojourner* predicates new life on death. Indeed this agonistic process of death and rebirth remains singular to the civil rights activist and links the activist back into a correspondence with nature and its magical productive capacity for rebirth and regeneration.

The conceptual linkage between activist and nature is made through the motif of ecstasy, wherein both political activism and interaction with a natural environment impart an altered point of view of time-space. Ecstasy is introduced as the definitive experience of the activist’s confrontation with death. In an untitled section in the novel a list of slain civil rights activists is followed by this note: “*It was a decade marked by death. Violent and inevitable. Funerals became engraved on the brain. Intensifying the ephemeral nature of life. For many in the South it was a decade reminiscent of earlier times, when...the thrill of being able, once again, to endure unendurable loss produced so profound an ecstasy in mourners that they strutted*” (*M*, 21). Ecstasy later appears as the most defining feature of both *The Sojourner* and the Sacred Serpent. *Meridian* notes that *The Sojourner* “filled her with the same sense of minuteness and hugeness, of past and present, of sorrow and ecstasy that she had known at the Sacred Serpent” (*M*, 92). Thus both the activist and the nature-artifact are capable of gathering life and death into a singular unified experience of time-space.

*Meridian*’s experience of ecstasy related to what I am calling the artifact-nature of *The Sacred Serpent* is described as a sublime moment of heightened sensual engagement with the world:

the clouds that drifted slowly over her were like a mass of smoke cupped in downward-slanting palms...She had contact with no other living thing; instead

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<sup>320</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” 108, 87.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-58.

she was surrounded by the dead....It was as if the walls of the earth that enclosed her rushed outward, leveling themselves at a dizzying rate, and then spinning wildly, lifting her out of her body and giving her the feeling of flying. And in this moment she saw the faces of her family, the branches of trees, the wings of birds, the corners of houses, blades of grass and petals of flowers rush toward a central point high above her and she was drawn to them, as whirling, as bright, as free, as they. Then the outward flow, the rush of images, returned to the center of the pit where she stood, and what had left her as its going was returned (*M*, 52-53).

This spiritual meridian is described not so much as a static location as it is a form of dynamic engagement and interaction. Just as time and space are in flux, it is Meridian's imagined relationship to the matrices of time and space that brings about a broadening of her perspective outside of its limitation within her body, "lifting her out of her body" and giving her a birds-eye view of global forces. Alone, this naturalistic sublime would not have the political significance that it does in the novel, but as the experience of ecstasy is related to political activism, the personal experience of ecstasy in nature takes on political significance as it also represents the individual's possession of a capacity to perceive and confront and expanded global perspective as if it were an encounter with death, with a time-space that exceeds the individual's point of view. Yet for Meridian's ancestors such an expanded capacity to endure damage while preserving life arises out of strict necessity.

Stories shape Meridian's point of view at an early age by forcing her to understand the present as being constituted through the damage and deaths buried in the marginalized history of her maternal ancestors; recovering these stories is like acting upon the structure of time and space as "the past pulled the present out of shape" (*M*, 90). As part of her political "awakening," Meridian self-consciously rehearses the stories that she has been told throughout her life about her mother's lineage; these stories represent how narrative functions in a manner not unlike political and natural ecstasy, which results in the expansion of consciousness through a confrontation with death. The reader at the same time accesses these stories from Meridian's point of view, which functions as a pedagogical tool that suggests how narrative expands one's consciousness, perspective, and individual experience of time and space. As the story goes, Mrs. Hill's great-great grandmother was a slave whose children were constantly being sold away from her only to be miraculously stolen back by their mother. The slave master finally brokers a deal with her—she could keep her children on the condition that they would only be fed by food she managed to procure on her own. The narrative uses pastoral images of nature to reinforce the idealization of Mrs. Hill's great-great grandmother's strength as if it were somehow nurtured in the natural environment:

During the summers their existence was not so hard. They learned to pick berries at night, after the day's work in the fields, and they gathered poke salad and in the autumn lived on nuts they found in the woods. They smoked fish they caught in the streams and the wild game she learned to trap. They were able to exist this way until the children were in their teens. Then their mother died, the result of years of slow starvation. The children were sold the day of their mother's burial (*M*, 128).

Ironizing the romantic notion that nature provides the necessary sustenance in the absence of what Booker T. Washington called "artificial infrastructure," the novel both affirms nature's palliative qualities while suggesting that it is an insufficient alternative to exclusion from equal access to the life-enhancing privileges and infrastructure of the state.

The following paragraph takes us to the next generation of women with Mrs. Hill's great-grandmother. This woman was famous for her barn murals that allowed her to make enough money to buy her own freedom as well as her husband's and children's. The description of one of these murals suggests that she has learned to channel the powerful creative capacities of her mother who singlehandedly kept her children alive: "At the center of each tree or animal or bird she painted, there was somehow drawn in, so that it formed a part of the pattern, a small contorted face—whether of man or woman or child, no one could tell—that became her trademark" (*M*, 128). Again pastoral imagery is infused with gothic elements as Mrs. Hill's great-grandmother's creative capacity to produce these pastoral murals evokes the untimely death of her mother with the "small contorted face" that is her trademark. Mrs. Hill's own mother took on extra work washing other people's laundry in addition to her own field labor and chores in order to pay for her daughter's schooling. This again results in premature death, as her mother dies shortly after Mrs. Hill becomes a schoolteacher.

Hearing these stories from her mother, "Meridian wept and clung to her hands, wishing with all her heart she had not been born to this already overburdened woman" (*M*, 130). The excavation of buried history that the novel performs treats stories as "natural" artifacts, a timeless and unchanging source of wisdom, and yet the narrative avoids such reductions of the past to a pre-lapsarian world. Stories are cognitive maps that utilize nature to help envision the virtual topography of the past as it informs the present. In a way stories are more enduring artifacts than natural objects; while the land of the Sacred Serpent is taken away by the government, "it was the story that was passed down to Meridian" (*M*, 52). Meridian's personal history as a narrative archeology of hidden risks and deaths, suggests that the stories themselves are painful burdens that damage Meridian while at the same time making her empathetic to the risks and damage endured by her maternal ancestors; this knowledge is translated into sympathy for the Movement and Meridian's ability to endure the risks taken on by civil rights activists. Meridian's political confrontation with death is pushed to a point of ecstasy, as "one day the blue became black and she temporarily...lost her sight" and Meridian "began to experience an ecstasy" that evokes the gothic dialectical spiral between "black" and "blue" in Ralph Ellison's preface to *Invisible Man* (*M*, 123, 124). The scene of Meridian's political ecstasy contains within it this key moment of narrative archeological regression into the painful history of Meridian's maternal lineage.

At both the personal and the political level, violence and damage represent the underside of idealism, for it is the ideal of Black Motherhood that Meridian imagines is passed down generation after generation, an ideal that intersects with the history of civil rights. Women like Harriet Tubman were the norm in Meridian's community, "black women were always imitating Harriet Tubman—escaping to become something unheard of. Outrageous" (*M*, 111). Meridian herself becomes associated with this indomitable "will," as the reader views her through the eyes of Truman Held at the beginning of the novel as "so strong" and able to face a tank and the animosity of a racist town all on her own (*M*, 20). This same stereotype of black women's power functions in the society at large, evidenced in the doctor's desire to sterilize Meridian's body after he performs an abortion on her. Meridian's body is described as excessively fertile—she gets immediately pregnant with her first boyfriend's child, which she gives away for adoption, and again becomes pregnant the first time she has sex with Truman, after which she falls into a depression and gets the abortion. The doctor voices a stereotype that became popularized as a reaction to the War on Poverty, described earlier in this chapter, which associated black women with an over-abundance of fertility necessitating disciplinary management by the state: "as the

doctor tore into her body without giving her anesthesia (and while he lectured her on her morals) she saw stars because of the pain” (*M*, 118). And when Meridian experiences her strange paralysis and loss of vision, the doctor again examines her body, “she was asked if she slept with boys. She was asked why she slept with boys” (*M*, 123). The doctor offers to tie Meridian’s tubes to control what he imagines to be her rampant sexuality in exchange for sex. She herself is “disgusted with the fecundity of her body that got pregnant on less screwing than anybody’s she had ever heard of” and tells the doctor, “ ‘Burn e’m out by the roots for all I care’ ” (*M*, 119). In this instance, Meridian embodies both the civil rights ideal of Black Womanhood and the popular degraded image of the Welfare Queen. Seemingly polar opposites, both stereotypes circulate as a way to manage or channel what is imagined to be an exceptional productive power and capacity to give birth both literally and figuratively. It is in the naturalized black woman’s body that revolutionary violence or willingness to engage death and the biopolitical preservation of life are contained; rather it is in the capacity of Meridian’s body to both sustain violence and nurture life that the potential intersection between radical political and neo-liberal discourse is imagined.

As a sexually procreative body, Meridian is equated with a form of nature, the burning out of her “roots,” evokes the destruction of The Sojourner tree and the ripping out of Louvinie’s tongue, as well as the bulldozing of The Sacred Serpent mound. As a symbol of degraded nature, Meridian’s body mirrors the larger context of degradation and disposability that inscribes black life. More significantly, this form of degradation is almost always associated with the official state management of nature and ethnic cultures of nature. In contrapuntal images, the novel sets off the Hill’s spiritual use of the Sacred Serpent to the way in which the government, once having discovered its existence, bulldozes over the mound and the garden that Meridian’s father has planted all around it, in order to create a public park (*M*, 49). Through assimilation into the public park system, the Sacred Serpent land becomes used as a place of leisure activity and enjoyment restricted from use by the “Colored” population. In this anodyne environment cleansed of any experience of death, Meridian imagines that the hope of gaining any meaning from life “had already and forever been lost” (*M*, 54).

The novel differentiates the popular stereotype of the ecological Indian, suggested in the title of the chapter, “Indians and Ecstasy,” from the strategic function that the burial mound plays in Meridian’s cognitive mapping of space. The environment is often reduced both through management by the state (as a public park) and by the mediatization of experience into an empty spectacle. Meridian feels revolted by the exhibition of “the old bones of a warrior, shamelessly displayed” in “the Capitals’ museum of Indians” (*M*, 54). Another counterpoint to Meridian’s ecstatic engagement with the Sacred Serpent is evident in the section that precedes “Indians and Ecstasy” titled “Gold.” In this section, a seven-year-old Meridian discovers what she imagines to be a brick of gold, “To her amazement what she had found was a bar of yellow gold. Bullion they had called it in the movies” (*M*, 44). She proceeds to bury the gold in her yard and once a week digs it up and reburies it until it is eventually forgotten. In stark contrast to her father’s renunciation of land ownership in the following chapter, Meridian finds pleasure in re-enacting the fantasy of primitive accumulation, a ritual extraction of resources from the land for commodification. It is an empty ritual, none of her family being fooled by her “fool’s gold,” that is doubtless inspired by what she has seen in Hollywood movies. These reductions of nature and of ethnic cultures as nature completely efface the historical conditions that define natural spaces and resources. The ecstasy of acquisitiveness and accumulation as a form of freedom is



contrasted with the spiritual and political ecstasy that locates freedom in the absence of security, in the willingness to face and endure varying degrees of damage.

Just as The Sacred Serpent is taken over by government workers and transformed into a public park, in a later scene, a black community is discriminated against by local officials who close down the public pool rather than have it integrated. These same officials locate a reservoir ostensibly for the public good in this poor black community so that the overflow of water does not endanger the white population (*M*, 208). In a scene that evokes the drowning of Chicken Little in Toni Morrison's *Sula* (1973), Meridian carries to the mayor's office, "the bloated figure of a five-year-old boy who had been stuck in the sewer for two days before he was raked out with a grappling hook" (*M*, 209). In this way, violence to black bodies becomes more generalized to reflect how minorities assimilate into the progressive state as the novel progresses; in other words, violence is not solely limited to civil rights activists and Meridian herself.

Towards the end of the novel, Meridian's damaged body becomes directly associated with the generalized damage endured by poor black communities in the South. This is also the beginning of the novel, which places Meridian in the town of Chicokema, near the Georgia coast where Meridian reaches the seeming limit to her physical exhaustion:

It was true that she'd lost so much of her hair that finally she had shaved her head. ...And it was also true that she was frail and sickly looking. But among the impoverished, badly nourished black villagers—who attempted to thrive on a diet of salt meat and potatoes during the winter, and fresh vegetables without meat during the summer—she did not look out of place. In fact, she looked as if she belonged (*M*, 154).

Evoking the story of Meridian's personal with this impoverished community that is like Meridian's ancestors forced to live off of the natural environment, this scene reflects a type of damage that is normalized differently from the biopolitical context; damage and death are not kept at something that is perceived to be a manageable level. Damage is only managed to the extent that communities are expected to endure an unimaginable and un-human amount of suffering. The fact that they survive must be considered no less than a miracle, and the quality and viability of this kind of survival is called into question.

Barbara Christian asserts that the central theme in *Meridian* is the relationship between personal and social change, and she further suggests that, "the personal and societal quests for health and freedom are interrelated."<sup>323</sup> The issues of "health" and "freedom," I have suggested, are the key terms of biopolitical control in the sense that maintaining the health of the population is a vital element of liberal individual freedom and vice versa, which functions on two different levels, on bodies and on populations. I also suggested that minoritized populations function like generative principles that provide the logics of such a form of control. Black Feminist interest in the intersection between personal and social change thematizes this very function of coordinating an interface between bodily discipline and population management. *Meridian* suggests that to understand the general consequences of control over the population is to understand only half of the problem; chronicling institutional subjection fails to touch upon the way in which power manages the productive force of the body. The novel is careful to discern the difference between vulnerability to cultural norms, and the way in which racism has affected the individual body and the individual's perception of the history of the self.

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<sup>323</sup> Barbara Christina, *Black Women Novelists*, 206, 234.

Meridian witnesses the brutalization of old women and children in a generally racist society and feels guilty for her inability to protect them. One such young woman is named Anne, whom she enjoined to participate in a protest at Woolworth's segregated lunch counter downtown. The protestors are imprisoned as a group, and Meridian thinks she hears Anne screaming from another cell: "the screams became an accompaniment to the guilt already weighing her down" (*M*, 92). What is significant here is how Meridian's point of view of political activism, which functions to challenge the state's mode of population management, is genealogically related to a more private perception of guilt related to her mother. In other words, a private personal guilt both precede and compels Meridian's sense of political guilt or responsibility for the Movement; it is her mother "on whose account she endured wave after wave of primeval guilt" (*M*, 96). It is Meridian's sense of guilt toward her mother that compels her to take on the general risks that come with involvement in the Movement. It is her body that stood in the way of a reconciliation between her mother and that part of her own soul her mother could, perhaps, love. She valued her body less, attended to it less, because she hated its obstruction.... While other students dreaded confrontation with police she welcomed it, and was capable of an inner gaiety, a sense of freedom, as she saw the clubs slashing down on her from above. Only once was she beaten into unconsciousness, and it was not the damage done to her body that she remembered when she woke up, but the feeling of inner yearning, of heartsick longing for forgiveness (*M*, 97).

So the novel poses the relationship between the personal and the political as one founded on personal responsibility or guilt (a narrative not dissimilar to the neo-liberal schematization of risk). Yet while the dominant biopolitical imperative is to take on risk in order to care for oneself, to protect the capital-ability machine that is the self, *Meridian* outlines an intermediary process, one that entails an agonistic process of working through a sense of responsibility for and reckoning with a form of power that precedes the state, which is broadly constructed as something like maternal law, or the right of the mother over her children to, as Foucault says of biopolitical power, both let live and make die.<sup>324</sup>

The presence of guilt suggests that Meridian's subjection to her mother's ability to protect her precedes her interpellation by the biopolitical state. She exists prior to the state as the subject of her mother's care, completely dependent on her for life given the state's general and historic disregard for the lives of poor black children, as Christian asserts. Meridian's individual formation through her mother's disciplinary force precedes her interpellation by the state in the sense that the primary guilt that Meridian feels toward her mother supersedes the interpellation of the state with the consciousness that as a black woman, Meridian is always already damaged. As such, subjection to maternal law provides the foundation of an alternative path for subject formation that provides a radical redirecting of biopolitical values.

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<sup>324</sup> Here I am drawing from different intersecting theorizations of maternal production: Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978); Jacques Derrida's conception of maternal love or pietas in *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998); Hannah Arendt's theorization of natality or the capacity to give birth or choose differently as the cornerstone of democracy in *The Human Condition*; Maria Mies's theorization of the productive force of maternal reproduction in *Patriarchy and Accumulation*; and Abdul JanMohamed's undergraduate lectures on maternal reproduction in the novels of Toni Morrison.

While nature is insufficient to compensate for the damage that Meridian and her maternal ancestors endure, the violence of racism and sexism, and can be a dangerous concept when coupled with stereotypes of black women's bodies, it is nonetheless a discourse that is available in the absence of equal access to the state's protective institutions. As a more enduring artifact than official history proves to be for the memorialization of black life, nature is imagined to retain the history of generations of minority engagement in the cycles of violence, damage, and death. Yet nature is also always co-opted by the state and reinscribed with meanings that elide this function. The history of violence and control over women's productive capacities has forced women to hone their creative power, particularly over their reproductive ability to give birth and sustain the lives of children who are utterly vulnerable. A central component of this alternative creative force is the alternative cognitive mapping of space through an appropriation of symbols of nature and of narrative point of view as techniques of re-defining one's orientation to the time-space of biopolitical power based on the management of bodies and populations through the discourse of freedom and security. *Meridian* thereby overturns biopolitical stereotypes of black women's unproductive influence in civil society and overproductive influence in the realm of the bodily (Welfare Queen). Linking the fate of the Welfare Queen back to the struggle of the civil rights activist for revolutionary change, *Meridian* articulates a new path for post-civil rights struggle, one that entails conscious appropriation of black women's productive power to manage the intersecting points of view of generations of women in order to recreate themselves and the world in which they live.

#### **'The Ecology of the Self' in *The Salt Eater***

Toni Cade Bambara's *The Salt Eater* bears striking resemblances to *Meridian* particularly in its central concern for the future of political activism in the post-Civil Rights era. Like Walker, Bambara makes use of a range of naturalistic symbols to schematize a spatio-temporal critique of neo-liberalism; *The Salt Eater* visualizes space on the atomic level, tracing the minutest relations of power as they shape the world. It is the atomic environment that represents the unified field of bodily and general discipline and provides the connection between local and global experience, as the bus driver Fred Holt recalls his friend Porter saying, "As we sit here...we are dying from overexposure to some kind of wasting shit—the radioactive crap, asbestos particles, noise, smog, lies" (*SE*, 79). Porter suffers contamination from the 1955 atomic test blasts at Yucca Flats (*SE*, 80). Fred's perception of environmental toxicity grasps at a host of seemingly related symbols that represent a nexus of materially visible and invisible, and local and global threats—environmental symbols in this instance map how invisible abstract forces intersect with both local and bodily damage. Fred's perception of global environmental risks as it impacts the body, informed by his discussions with Porter a fellow bus driver, brings into relief the ability that the average citizen has to put together the pieces of a world in environmental crisis.

In this section, I will explore how *The Salt Eater* schematizes the imaginative capacities within individual point of view to conceptualize risk and to orient the individual in relation to environmental conceptions of globality. Like *Meridian*, *The Salt Eater* works within the neo-liberal biopolitical ordering of power, which manages local and global phenomena through the common matrix of productive energy or human capital. As noted in Chapter Three, David Harvey argues that the rise of liberal capitalism causes a significant shift in the way that we experience time and space. As capitalism expands globally, the problem of geographical distance is overcome with improved transportation and communication technologies that at the same time make possible the simultaneity of time across regions, most dramatically evident in the first

global capitalist crisis in the late-nineteenth century. Harvey calls the intensification of this phenomenon, which he notes as beginning in 1970 when the dollar becomes the world's reserve currency, time-space compression. Yet while Harvey, Frederic Jameson and other critics have argued that what emerges in the form of modernist and postmodernist aesthetics is a crisis of representation, which reflects the inability to represent a global totality from the individual's point of view, Bambara suggests that advances in technology reflect an innate human capacity to experience a multiplicity in both time and space; in other words, time-space compression becomes part of human capital, or what people have the capacity to do in order to help them navigate the world. Just as, in the novel, Fred and Porter watch on television the first images of Earth taken from the Moon that enable them to "see it all at once," Porter imagines himself going to "where the ice ends and the Antarctic meets the dark southern oceans of the great whales" (*SE*, 67). Yet against the holistic view on television, Porter's vision presents fragmented pieces of the whole, like Fred's recitation of environmental threats ("radioactive crap, asbestos particles, noise, smog, lies") that capture fragments that create an abstract collage of the capitalist world-system.

In contrast with Fred and Porter, whose points of view of the material landscape, I will examine later at length, clearly uncover the hidden historical geography of capitalism's creative destruction of space, the spiritual healers in the novel are capable of both seeing and inhabiting the "whole" earth. The novel opens with a healing in medias res by a spiritual healer, Minnie Ransom, whose capacity to see things whole provides a valuable resource for an aging black community with a history of participation in the struggle for human rights, which has left the community bruised and battered. Velma Henry is convalescing from her latest attempt at suicide at the Southwest Community Infirmary in Claybourne, a small community historically founded by freed slaves. She is both physically and spiritually battered by the struggle for civil rights, and has turned that violence inward on herself. Ransom is the spiritual guide who is in charged with guiding Velma back to embracing life. She asks Velma at the beginning of the novel, "Are you sure, sweetheart, that you want to be well?"<sup>325</sup> Like *Meridian*, the novel invokes the problem of future politics as an issue of the care of the self—dominant concepts in biopolitical control as I noted in the previous sections. Minnie reminds Velma during the healing, "You've got to be whole to see whole"; the novel's invocation of spiritual healing and wholeness directly addresses the problem that biopolitics faces: how to manage and protect the productive energies of life. Yet as the opening scene makes clear, the ability to "see whole" is dissociated from any conception of monetary security, and is instead linked to a political consciousness of the community's and the world's collective damage.

The novel, like *Meridian*, conceptualizes collective damage through two competing lenses: spiritual environmental consciousness and radical politics; in the *The Salt Eater* this results in factions that increasingly divide the community center, the Academy of the 7 Arts. Yet the novel asks the reader not necessarily to legitimize New Age spiritualism, but rather to understand under what circumstances such a logics gains the currency of truth. The narrative suggests that spirituality is itself a reflection of the dominant biopolitical privileging of life as a productive resource, as a form of energy or human capital in the sense that spiritualism is a form of population management that competes with biopolitics; as the healer Minnie complains, spirituality has been replaced by scientific management that can "prophecy with such mathematical certainty who will be ill and who well, who fertile and who sterile, who crazy and

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<sup>325</sup> Toni Cade Bambara, *The Salt Eater* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992 [1980]), 3.

who all right, who deserved to live and who was bound to die in precisely what manner” (*SE*, 52). This is a brilliant redaction of Foucault’s theory of biopolitics. Minnie imagines herself performing a similar task, clearing channels, zapping energy in her patient’s pineal, and reading the auras of tress and stones that resemble “high-tension cables” and “a powerhouse” (*SE*, 47). The process of successful healing requires that Minnie “know their frequency [her patients] as her own” (*SE*, 48). Through technological metaphors, spiritual ability is likened to the function of modern communication technology; moreover, the two “technologies” are somewhat competing for dominance as Minnie must lean to screen out the information that she intercepts from “police car messages, helicopter traffic signals, than all the CB foolishness” from “the wave from the Source” (*SE*, 53-54). Like the technology that provides the virtual communication apparatus necessary for biopolitical control, spirituality manages living energy, and treats all manner of life as a form of usable energy, through “global” virtual communication technologies. Ransom tells her spirit guide Old Wife, ““She [Velma] is good material... We need to get her back into circulation””; in order to do so, Minnie must virtually “track” Velma and bring her spirit back into her body (*SE*, 52).

The rise of New Age spiritualism in the seventies may be what the novel identifies as the unintended consequences of biopolitical management—“call and response,” “[f]eedback and contagion” (*SE*, 250). Spiritualism might be read as the mimicry of biopolitics that is also a critique of its domain of truth. I’ve been addressing similar types of phenomena that mimic biopolitical control as fall out experience, or experiences that are both generated under the existing regimes of power that yet go undetected because they have not been regarded as useful either by dominant or resistant paradigms. Spirituality is one such realm that remains vibrant yet delegitimized and overlooked as a viable form of resistance to contemporary forms of control. It is spirituality’s intimacy with contemporary power that gives it its currency, and that provides a compelling alternative to biopolitical conceptions of risk, care, security, and freedom. Thematizing environmental issues allows the novel to focus on the unintended consequences of biopolitical control—the underside of security and freedom. For example, while nuclear energy provides abundant energy or energy security by helping to create a post-scarcity environment, the unintended consequence represented in the novel is the radioactive waste that is generated at Transchemical, the chemical plant in Claybourne, and shipped on trains to a disposal site. These unintended consequences disproportionately affect Claybourne, a poor black community. With the rain, there is the threat that toxic chemicals will leach into the water table. The plant itself remains for the most part in the background of the events that take place in the narrative, as smoke is seen billowing from the plant throughout the novel by a number of different characters. Workers at the plant, made up of Claybourne residents, also subject themselves to toxins, as the company requires annual health exams, the results of which remain undisclosed to the workers themselves. So that on one level, the poor black residents find a direct analogy in the natural environment as both are threatened and contaminated by the country’s demand for energy. Spiritualism is a discourse that assumes the charge of this reduction of all life to a universal form of energy in order to imagine new methods of communicating and combating the damage done in the liberal capitalist context.

What spiritualists and activists have in common in the novel is their ability to replicate biopolitical methods of management. The women activists at the community center are constantly implementing tools to organize the community,

calculating: money to be raised, mailing lists to be culled, halls to be booked, flyers to be printed up, hours away from school, home, work, sleep to be

snatched...[T]he women went on writing: so many receptions to cater, tickets to print, chickens to fry, cakes to box, posters to press, so many gifts to exhort from downtown merchants for raffles and Bingo, ads to place, billboards to commandeer, a hot-plate demo at the auto show, bands to book, a crafts-and-books booth at the school bazaar, a rummage sale, an auction of whatever first edition Old Reilly might still have on his shelves, and what home boy or home-girl-made-good-in-show-biz could be counted on for a benefit show” (*SE*, 27-28).

The organizing women in the novel must perform the complex task of practically managing the population by translating the actuarial strategies mapped out by the male leaders of the group into the minute practical details of fund raising and communication. Velma accuses these men of being “abstractionists” who would “make good bombardiers” and “military beasts” because of their tendency to see the world only in abstract terms (*SE*, 31).

The danger inherent in this incomplete perspective that the leaders of the group display is reiterated in the novel’s representation of nuclear engineers who are so blind to the real consequences of their mental games that their actions present the severest threat to the community and to planetary life. A group of these engineers are sitting at the local café, the Avocado Pit, playing games called Fission and Fail-Safe Phooey in order to determine who will pay for the next round of drinks (*SE*, 213). In Fission, they play at “putting together various fissionable elements, fuels, propellants, outlining processes, conditions, possible containers...so many colored balls on the green tablecloth” (*SE*, 213). In Fail-Safe Phooey, the engineers try to devise ways of tampering with the fail-safe system. Their waiter, Campbell hopes one day to copyright his own version of these games to market to Parker Brothers—in the game Disposal, each player receives “a sum of money, some property—nuclear reactors, uranium mines, etc., 5,000 pounds of uranium tailings and a load of contaminated items to dispose of” (*SE*, 208). At the same café, Jan and Ruby, from the Women for Action group, discuss in a parallel conversation the dangers of nuclear armament; Jan tells Ruby, “‘The drive for invulnerability usually leaves one totally vulnerable....Take U.S. policy on nuclear armament for a case in point.’” (*SE*, 216). Blind to the real risks involved in their nuclear games, the engineers and Campbell display a limited point of view of environmental risk. It is this blindness that Jan suggests, provides the impetus for such extreme security measures that in fact threaten the very security they are intended to protect.

Opposed to the specialist’s point of view that perceives abstract power, literally at the atomic level, the novel explores the point of view of the average worker as a multifaceted negotiation of time and space (both specific and abstract) that necessarily arises as one’s life intersects with the lives of others. Most significantly, the novel excavates Fred Holt’s consciousness as he completes his bus route through to Claybourne. In his bus is a motley crew of passengers that include a band of stranded musicians; a travelling performance group called the Seven Sisters (which includes Velma’s sister Palma) coming for the cultural festival and to protest the local chemical plant; a Christian group; a boy carrying a snake. As different as his passengers are, Fred’s thoughts, his point of view is influenced by each of them as he listens in on bits and pieces of their conversations. For example, Fred has listened to the women over the course of three hours “babbling about corn and rice and plutonium bombs and South Africa and Brer Rabbit and palm oil and the CIA and woodcuts” and “[n]ow John Henry” (*SE*, 67). The last item refers to a conversation between Mai and Nilda, women from the Seven Sisters, just prior to Fred’s observation; they discuss writing a performance piece about John Henry and Kwan Cheong titled “The Central and Union Pacific race for profit” (*SE*, 66). Fred immediately picks

up the theme of trains and nuclear destruction when he is stopped at a crossing for an actual train that rumbles by the bus. As the train goes by, the narrative turns to free indirect discourse to reveal Fred's semi-conscious thoughts:

He'd heard they shipped trash from nuclear plants in cars like that. Flat cars bearing the weight of freight cars he usually saw traveling under their own steam when he did the run from St. Louis to Memphis....On his left up ahead a salvage yard, bathtubs and kitchen sinks. Old men in tatters huddled around a burning trash can....It could be the Depression again he was thinking....He thought of the Depression years, of how the neighbors at night used to trade flour and beans and salt pork in the shadows of the tool sheds....How they [his family] wouldn't eat at all till his father's older brother got in from the trains, food from the dining cars wrapped in napkins and stuffed in shoe boxes....Yes, it could be the Depression all over again....the pension-fund scandal...talk about oil rationing and food shortages....Inflation" (*SE*, 69-70).

Like Yamamoto's comparison of the Depression to the Oil Shock, this scene represents Fred's analogy between the Depression and economic and environmental devastation in the novel's present, which occurs in the last quarter of the seventies, and goes on to describe a past conversation that Fred had with his friend Porter, when Porter argued that nuclear plants only hire the old because they are disposable as Fred himself reads in the newspaper of former chemical plant workers dying of cancer (*SE*, 70-71). The women's conversation on the bus evokes a past time-space in Fred's point of view that weaves the present into the Depression era into a more recent past conversation. This is all achieved through the circulation of common symbols: trains, nuclear destruction, and disposability. What these common symbols suggest is an existential openness to other people's perspectives and use of symbols. This scene also poignantly illustrates the immense virtual communicative apparatus that lies in the hands of basically your average worker—the constant flow of information and images between and within the individual as he moves seamlessly from different time-spaces like Depression-era Memphis to a café in the recent past where Porter and Fred had their discussion of Transchemical, and back to the present.

It is the most recent memory of a discussion with Porter about the lung problems developed by workers at Transchemical that reminds Fred to get a checkup at the Infirmary as images of nuclear destruction continue to shape his perspective of the present landscape. I will cite another passage extensively because it is necessary to understand the depths to which the novel goes to reveal the "average worker's" mapping of time-space:

Passing on his right was a huge plain of mud, red, like the deep-red mud near the river mouth behind the old house when he was in short pants, then knickers. A plain of fresh destruction, he composed, as if to report this sight to Porter....Stores gutted, car shells overturned, a playground of rust and twisted steel....new-looking brick and lumber strewn about but not haphazardly, as if a crew had brushed them off with profit in mind....A project not long ago put up was now this pile of rubble. And in the middle of it all a crater....Same old number, he thought, rumbling over the tracks. Redevelopment. Progress. The master plan. Cut back in services, declare blight, run back from the suburbs and take over....Home one minute, a crater the next. Flower boxes, stoops, lawns slipping into the maw of the mechanical monsters....Over and over in fuck you repetition....A gaping hole, a grave, a pit. Nothing to even pass by in a car with the grandchildren

...Like the home he'd known for too short a time, but a sweet time for a while. Pruitt-Igo raised up a monument one minute, blown up a volcano the next (*SE*, 72-73).

In a kind of call and response, Fred's expansion on the Seven Sisters' conversation produces what the novel calls "feedback," a new point of view that adds to the images and symbols used by the women. As a bus driver, Fred's point of view renders visible the material effects of urban renewal and the process of creative destruction wherein poor black neighborhoods are obliterated and deterritorialized in order to be reterritorialized in another form. Furthermore, Fred's point of view links together the process of urban renewal and nuclear destruction through the common metaphor of environmental destruction with the obliteration of space, "a gaping hole, a grave, a pit."

Engaging his life experience of this process of environmental destruction, Fred's point of view brings into relief the history of capitalist creative destruction, from the obliteration of the historical geography of Memphis, to the historic progressive attempt in 1954 to provide affordable housing with the urban housing project in St. Louis, Pruitt-Igo, which was demolished by the federal government in the name of slum clearance in 1972, to the present evidence of ongoing creative destruction in the landscape. Through Fred's point of view, the novel brings into relief the creative capacity that the average individual holds to "compose" a conceptual image of the forces that shape the world; Fred's semi-conscious associations enable him to navigate time-space compression with the innate human ability to inhabit multiple places in time. Yet relatively unconscious of this process, Fred somaticizes his experience and attributes the anxiety he feels with what he sees to his having eating some rancid food.

The novel draws a striking parallel between Fred's cognitive mapping abilities and Velma's; both characters exhibit the same associative thinking that links together the past, present, and future, and both characters are driven by this experience to a desire for suicide. Fred fantasizes driving his bus into the swamp, and Velma has actually attempted to kill herself several times, most recently by sticking her head into her kitchen oven. The risks involved with seeing the whole picture is made clear by Minnie Ransom's warning regarding the responsibilities that come with being well, as she tells Velma, "wholeness is no trifling matter. A lot of weight when you're well" (*SE*, 10). While the associative links in Velma's train of thought become more conscious as they are more political than Fred's, they, at the same time, are held together by Velma's memories of being damaged in some way. During the healing, Velma responds consciously to Minnie's words; after Minnie exhorts, "Release, sweetheart. Give it all up. Forgive everyone everything. Free them. Free self," Velma is aware of being "in a telepathic visit with her former self," as she imagines herself back in her kitchen just prior to her attempted suicide (*SE*, 18-19). Velma imagines that she is "freeing herself" by attaining a kind of "self-sufficient" isolation from the world, like being sealed in a glass jar, because she can find "[n]o escape" from the demands of the world (*SE*, 19). Then as she hears Minnie's voice give the instruction, "Release, sweetheart. Let it go. Let the healing power flow," Velma is again thrown back into the past, to a moment in a restaurant where her husband James Henry Lee, now called Obie, iterated a very similar message instructing her, "learn to let go of the pain" (*SE*, 21). His words plunge Velma into an even deeper past, to a scene where she is part of the group Women for Action who form an ad hoc committee to protest the unequal distribution of work allocated to the women, who are responsible for the burden of achieving an agenda decided by the male leaders of the group. At this meeting, Jay Patterson has invited Marcus Hampden of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists to address the group, after which Patterson



announces his plan to run for office. As Hampden sits down after his speech, he touches the zipper on his cordovan boots, “while Velma, distracted, was remembering some absurdly shiny boots back in the days of the marching” (*SE*, 33). This image of the boots combined with the coincidence of Velma’s menstrual cycle takes the narrative further into the past, to a day of protest, where Velma struggles with her period alongside marchers that are being “[s]hot at, spit on, nearly run down.... Murder mouthed, lobbed with everything from stones to eggs”; then Velma finds herself “[e]xhausted...squinting through the dust and grit of her lashes when the limousines pulled up....[a]nd the door opened and the cool blue of the air-conditioned interior billowed out into the yellow and rust-red of evening. Her throat was splintered wood. Then the shiny black boots stepping onto the parched grass” (*SE*, 34-35). Outraged by the extravagance of the male leadership of the political movement for which she risks her life, Velma’s physical vulnerability is symbolized by her menstrual cycle, as she must manage her “blood and rage” against the cool veneer of male leadership.

The reader emerges from this memory within a memory with another physical symbol that bridges the two time-spaces; as Palma, Velma’s sister nudges her to continue speaking at the meeting with Patterson, the sound of her cowrie-shell bracelet, which Velma had gotten at the march, brings Velma back into the nearer past. As the narrative slips back and forth between these two scenes, Velma is finally brought back to the present of the novel and to the healing that is under way at the Infirmary with a growl that is originally uttered in her outrage at the protest, which carries over into a growl that she utters at her husband in the café, and finally to a growl that she is currently releasing for Minnie to hear (*SE*, 41). All of these movements through time and space happen on a conscious level for Velma the activist, while for Fred, it remains subconscious. Through representation of Velma’s imaginative occupation of multiple spaces within the simultaneity of an instant, the novel attributes the experience of time-space compression to characters’ “natural” communication technology that the novel describes as the “ecology of the self” (*SE*, 247). The “ecology of the self” is defined near the end of the novel, as the narrative turns into an omniscient point of view to describe the collective moment of radicalization through the engagement of symbols of nature:

one would run the back roads to the woods, not jogging in unpaid outfits, trampling shoots, not moving in with tents, dope and bombed-out playmates mouthing off ‘We’re into nature,’ not hiding out in Wordsworth or Kerouac, excusing the self from social action, but running to the woods in hopes of an audience with the spirits long withdrawn from the farms and gardens all withered and wasted....running toward a clearing, toward a likely sanctuary of the saints, the loa, the dinns, the devas. And found one would open and welcome one in before the end, welcome one in in time to wrench time from its track so another script could play itself out....recognizing that life depended on it, that initiation was the beginning of transformation and that the ecology of the self, the tribe, the species, the earth depended on just that” (*SE*, 247).

Here the narrative radically unites spiritualism with environmental activism, “not hiding out in Wordsworth or Kerouac,” in pastoral conceptions of environmental escape from the crises of modern life, but turning to the spiritual imagined energies inherent in the environment as if “life depended on it” on the “initiation” of human life into part of the natural order that exceeds the biopolitical attempts to manage it. The “ecology of the self” in addition relies on narrative to construct the point of view of the self that brings into relief the intersection or interrelationship between characters as part of a “tribe” or “species” that naturally enables a subterranean

communication network in the novel. Creating a collage effect from shifting points of view, the novel weaves together the intersections between points of view and intersections between internal mindscapes and external geographies to show how all characters and points of view are connected both physically and psychically.

Consciousness of this psychic and spatial pattern of interconnection and communication is the beginning of radical politics, illustrated in the common practice among activists in the novel of exercises that consciously re-appropriate something like individual human capital. For example, Obie, who directs the Academy exercises a self-consciousness of his body and the energy all around him: “Arms wide, legs apart, in an open body position, he was sure there was a plan, a pattern that would reveal itself if he’d but stay available to it. He sensed a plan of growth for himself, for him and Velma, for the Academy, for the national community, for the planet...And so he stretched and breathed deeply, trying to pay attention to what he saw and heard and felt around him and inside” (*SE*, 98). As he waits for a massage to engage his “pressure points,” Obie “instructed himself, contain suppressed feelings, memories, energies. He tried thinking that through, tried recalling recent entries in his journal” (*SE*, 161). Obie’s attempt to “contain” his own “energies” is done through self-reflection, as suggested in his recollection of journal entries, and through an awareness of his physical body. Likewise, Velma’s godmother Sophie Heywood does not to “break discipline” during her participation in Velma’s healing by breaking her silence. In this way, activists perform a kind of self-discipline, but that disciplines the self differently than what is the norming of dominant society. For this minoritized racialized population normalized, in Foucault’s terms, to be abnormal, individuals and communities must practice the healing art upon themselves, as Minnie would say, clearing channels and trying to zap energies. Yet their healing practices directly mirror biopolitical processes of population management through the optimization of life; minorities continue to participate in biopower as a kind of corruption, through “feedback” and “contagion,” of its main intent.

This need for an alternative method of preserving and protecting life is embodied in the Southwest Community Infirmary, where the slogan runs “HEALTH IS YOUR RIGHT” (*SE*, 116). The infirmary is a material symbol of the separate infrastructure required to sustain a minoritized population that is marginalized by the larger progressive apparatuses of the state. The infirmary thereby signifies the existence of life that exceeds the biopolitical state, which is further symbolized by the Old Tree that is planted to commemorate the history of the Infirmary’s founding. It is said that while the Infirmary could be destroyed and all evidence of its ever having existed abolished in the history books, the tree planted beside it at its founding in 1871, as an innocuous decorative plant, would escape suspicion from ill-meaning forces: “the young sapling” is “planted as a gift to the generation to come, as a marker, in case the Infirmary could not be defended” (*SE*, 145). Minnie Ransom’s spiritualism functions to preserve similar collective symbols of life; she is instructed by the spirits to build a chapel in her mind and a fountain, also in her mind, near the location (*SE*, 53). These natural symbols represent resistance as the geographical reappropriation of spaces that remain unused precisely because they fall out of dominant organizing practices: the imaginary places that the narrative describes as “the concealed world on the far side of the mind,” as well as innocuous natural symbols that inconspicuously fall into the background. The roots of Old Tree, “earth-hugging networks of fingers and limbs” symbolizes the covert rhizomatic power of collective action (*SE*, 146). The swamp represents another location that the novel reappropriates as a central symbol of political radicalization—it is the where Fred wishes to bury his bus and where Sophie “finds” Velma wandering—it symbolizes nature’s ability to endure violence; a seeming wasteland, the swamp is

represented as containing a covert fecundity that symbolizes Velma's ability to survive damage and even death, containing the "earliest forms of life" that represent the potential for "new life" (*SE*, 86).

Such covert practices of investing radical political values in nature are necessary because it is made clear that the dominant powers in the region and the world seek to exploit black power. This power dynamic is geographically rendered through an elaborate description of the town's layout:

The Infirmary at the base of the hill; its north windows looking out toward the post office that had gone up on the first bluff where cars, buses and trucks shifted gear for the pull up. And the Infirmary's sun deck overlooking the Regal Theatre marquee which jutted out so close to the curb, bold children on the school buses would lean out on a dare and snatch the bulbs or remove letters from the racks leaving baffling announcements, while the driver shifted gears for the final pull up the Gaylord Heights where a fountain ought to have been, or a plaza for couples to promenade about on Sunday afternoons, or a public garden with a pond and some of the statuary on exhibit in the halls of the Academy should have been. But where stood like a sentinel the gaslight in front of the wrought iron gate of the Russell estate, eager to annex unto itself the whole of Gaylord Hill, the prime real estate of Black turf that ended somewhere between the lane—where the bus turned carrying away the chemical plant workers and Heights' domestics and the schoolchildren—and the mailbox some six hundred feet below the gaslight. The flame in a nervous flicker always....The tongue of the flame darting, striking at the globe. Each year a new globe to replace the one shattered not by the fanglike flame but by the bus riders just before turning into the lane. Each year a globe more ornate and preposterous than the last, as if the Russells were convinced that it was their manifest burden to bear the torch to bring light to the natives of Gaylord Hill" (*SE*, 120-121).

The images of electricity (the flame is not a real one but an electric one) evoke Ralph Ellison's earlier use of electric power as an allegory of the biopolitical management of energy and more significantly black life. The electricity that powers the allegory of Empire as it is represented in this passage "drew upon the power line that fed the Regal and the rest of the establishment of the Hill, that, of course, had to foot the bill, and wasn't that just the way?" (*SE*, 121). Just as the Russell estate and the Gaylord Heights residents poach off of the energy produced by the African American community, the chemical plant treats African American workers as disposable resources. Yet even in the face of such omnipotent global power, signaled by the "globe" that becomes more "ornate and preposterous" each year, the passage points to the impossibility of ever achieving total discipline, of totally capturing the creative and raucous energy of the people on the bus—the schoolchildren, the domestics, the plant workers—who continue to smash and destroy the globe as the bus passes by it.

As much energy as power succeeds in managing, there remains an abundance of creative energy and potential to be harnessed through conscious appropriation. Doc Serge, who manages the Infirmary, like Obie, consciously practices self-discipline that conserves his energy: "He headed in the general direction of the treatment room, feeling that familiar wave of energy surge through him. In another minute, he sensed, he would generate enough energy to found a dynasty, lift a truck, start a war, light up the whole of Clayborne for a week" (*SE*, 136). This explicit reference to "light" suggests the covert political potential that self-discipline and self-

consciousness holds for addressing the global dynamics that one Claybourne sage is quoted as describing as the “ ‘world-wide program...to drain the juices and put out the lights’ ” (*SE*, 121). Opposed to the dominant doctrine of self interest, Doc Serge practices a form of self-love that eschews capitalist gain, “reciting declarations of self-love”: “ ‘I love myself more than I love money and pretty women and fine clothes. I love myself more than I love neat gardens and healthy babies and a good gospel choir’ ” (*SE*, 137).

Velma’s physical ailment resides in her inability to return to a place of love, as she holds on to painful memories that constantly pull her back into the past. Her godmother, Sophie, presents an alternative model, letting go of pain in order to let in a new point of view. Sophie performs this process through her attempt to “track” Velma during the healing. First she leaves the room where the Master’s Mind are performing the healing and secludes herself in Doc Serge’s office. Sitting as still and silent as she can in the office, her mind begins to travel to the ends of the earth, “She sat still though the chair dumped her, sat still through her legs climbed through circles on the same longitude where Mighty Titans poised underground like dragon’s teeth snapping at the life of radishes, yams, grasses, and grains, alternating the natural cycle, heating up the earth. Climbed on through...earthquake landscapes, and landslides, and grumbling where the grinding of the earth’s plates gnashed disturbed....She was still” (*SE*, 149). Through magical realist description, the narrative describes the real processes through which the individual can be in “two places at once,” where the mind traverses the globe as the body remains still. Sophie’s point of view renders visible a “whole” Earth, united through the physical geography of its natural processes. As a practice of self-discipline, a conscious directing of her point of view, Sophie’s ability to mentally “let go” of her confinement allows her to begin to draw imagistic associations between the present and the past.

In her first association, she moves from the confined space of the office to the confined space of a prison cell where she was once beaten during a protest: Doc Serge’s office “could’ve been a 4X4 cell she sat in, a metal ledge of a cot and not hot leather severing her legs from her thighs, a concrete floor with bloodstains her feet pressed against, a stinking toilet with no lid she stared into. Her neighbor Edgers, not fatigue, bending her head down” (*SE*, 149). Sophie in a sense “follows” Velma, down the path of her own painful memories of being physically damaged during a political protest where the policed forced her neighbor Edgers to beat her.<sup>326</sup> Remembering Velma’s rage over this incident, and her anger towards Edgers for going along with the beating, Sophie explores Velma’s point of view and then insists that Edgers had refused to continue beating her and was beaten himself (*SE*, 151). Setting the record straight, Sophie exhaled it all out and tried to go blank, tried to switch off memory’s pictures and supplant them with peaceful scenes. To go gathering, the feel of the basket handle on her arm. To talk with the lemon grass, enlist the cooperation of eucalyptus....Eyebright in the underbrush calling. Bladderwort singing. Calamus around the salt marshes....The gathering of fresh things, natural things, fish herbs, salad greens. Natural growth, no forced foods to weaken the will to live....To go gathering, Sophie sighed. And let her soul get on with its gathering and return with greater force to its usual place. But so hard to do” (*SE*, 152).

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<sup>326</sup> This scene refers to an infamous beating that Fannie Lou Hammer experienced while she was imprisoned.

Not an escape from political struggle, Sophie's imaginative escape into the pastoral scene of gathering herbs functions as an intentional mental exercise that allows her to both revisit and relinquish her painful memory of the past, to allow her to recollect her own will to continue to struggle and to "return with greater force." It is Sophie who first "finds" Velma, as Sophie later appears in one of Velma's memories just before she begins to find her way back into the treatment room. It is a memory in which Velma tells Sophie about a dream she has of symbolically dying. Sophie instructs, " 'Not all wars have casualties, Vee. Some struggles between old and new ideas, some battles between ways of seeing have only victors. Not all dying is the physical self'" (SE, 219). Sophie's advice further explains the dialectical relationship that she establishes in her process of "gathering," enduring battle damage by shifting her perspective to nature's embodiment of live things. It is this message of choosing life to transcend death that Velma engages when she imagines that Minnie Ransom has founder her in the carbon cave where she is hiding—which signals her temporary refuge in the earth (SE, 259).

*The Salt Eater's* utilization of what Lawrence Buell calls "toxic discourse" functions to illustrate how issues of racialized damage must be seen in terms of environmental degradation and the relationship between material and immaterial relations of power in time and space. I do not seek to argue that women and the environment are newly exploited with the expansion of global capitalism after World War II; instead I seek to uncover within the form of neo-liberalism itself and within the capitalist logic, how a racialized, sexualized, and naturalistic logics functions. In so doing, I propose a critique of the intersectional exploitation of race, gender, and the environment as productive discourses, or what Foucault calls "generative principles" that are themselves endowed with cultural and economic currency as locations of truth and knowledge in a biopolitical society. Developing an alternative approach to freedom and security, Bambara, Lorde, Morrison, and Walker through cognitive mapping highlight what is at heart a contradiction between society's idealization of black Civil Rights activists and natural environments, and its systematic degradation of black life and the environment. Bambara presents the most nuanced map of how precisely the power of what Hardt and Negri call the multitude is to be reappropriated, suggesting that each individual point of view is constituted through the indissociable bond between others' perspectives and the consciousness of time-space compression. Minnie Ransom calls this process "tracking," whereby the individual is perpetually "hunting" others just as she hunts Velma, learning other ways of being in the world (SE, 267). This empathetic interaction with the world results in the expansion of consciousness as well as in the individual and collective capacity to manage and direct the potentially radical power contained within the human and nonhuman multitude.

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