Sublimated Frontier

An Exploration of the Relationship between Modernity and Past Versions of the Nature/Culture Dichotomy in American History

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Preface

The purpose of this work will be to explore changes in the relationship of American culture to nature from the frontier period to the modern age. Contemporary American culture often uses the history of the frontier as a means of bolstering an official ideology of progress. However, the rapid development of the continent during the frontier period was justified at the time by a conception of divine purpose embedded in a relationship with nature no longer existing in modernity. But themes from the frontier remain strong in contemporary America and although the perception of modernity is often described as involving a felt separation from the land, it seems impossible to properly understand the ideology that American culture has built upon its frontier experience without reference to the historical interaction of the settler with natural conditions. Divorced from their original sociopolitical contexts by the changes of history, frontier themes such as the deification of the environment espoused by the transcendentalists, the Jeffersonian dream of an agrarian utopia, and the rugged individualism and competition of Jacksonian politics continue to play a major role in American culture.

This thesis will trace the definition of American national ideology as a product of pioneer experience to the writings of Frederick Jackson Turner, who argued in the 1890s that the traits of character inherited from the frontier had become inherent to American culture and thus would carry on into the modern age despite the end of the actual frontier.[1] In this paper I will argue that Turner's legacy of basing American exceptionalism and national identity on the frontier period is threatened by the resurfacing of past cultural perspectives which conflict with the conditions of modernity. It is my contention that past versions of the nature-culture dichotomy coalesce in the modern imagination, brought to light by reference to expressions of American uniqueness that recall the period of the frontier and extinct modes of interacting with nature. Turner's construction of a cohesive identity from the lessons of frontier history will be pitted in this paper against the concept of cultural memory which does not make sense of history's changes in the same fashion as academic historicism but rather functions as a collection of past cultural perspectives that have both moderated and have been moderated by the changes of history. Throughout this work I will present a psychological view of history which will explore cultural memory as the repressed subconscious of rational modernity in order to illustrate the paradox between an official ideological culture based on frontier history and the disconnection from nature produced by modernity.

[1] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, a collection of essays by Frederick Jackson Turner. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1996).

The changing relationship between nature and culture in American history will take a dialectical form in this work. The frontier period, represented primarily by Turner's writings, forms the thesis. Antithesis follows with the perspectives of modernity produced both by the physical forces of modernization and the resulting changes in culture reacting to these forces. Finally, past attitudes and forms of the nature/culture relationship sublimated and reinterpreted by modernity, though still very much a part of social dialogue, form the synthesis.

I have endeavored to present this shift in American culture's relationship to nature in a holistic manner; as affecting individual experience, social structure, political ideology and cultural representations. Thus, key themes such as the insulation from nature occurring with the rise of modernity will be linked to a variety of factors including Turner's argument that the need for expansion would be provided by markets and innovation after the close of the frontier, the insulating effects of urbanization and the alteration of social structure created by new media technologies. The reaction of agrarian culture in the 1800s to the growth of cities and industry will also be discussed holistically through a comparison with Thoreau's pastoral radicalism, Jeffersonian politics, and the concessions of the Populist movement needed to deal with the emerging conditions of the Gilded Age. Through these varied historical areas, both politics and culture will be explored as evolving alongside America's changing landscape.

Psychological, ideational and sentimental aspects of the historical experience of nature as presented through literature will also be discussed in order to broaden the scope of my study beyond the physical and political shifts of modernization. The pioneer virtue of adaptability in the face of harsh natural conditions cited by Turner will therefore not only be linked to the development of frontier democracy, but finds representation in the terms of personal experience through narratives from colonial literature portraying nature as antagonistic to social development. Similarly, the pastoral mode as representing escapism and criticism of complex society in literature will be compared with the competitive individualism of frontier communities.

Throughout this work I have presented the mythic portrayal of nature's influences as a key aspect of American culture before the 20th century. Presented primarily in literature, the view of nature as a transcendent source of guidance finds continuing representation in contemporary literature and film despite criticism that the search for spiritual experience in wilderness is the result of an urban-centered mentality. During the frontier period, the theme of nature as enlightening the pioneer spirit portrayed by Turner was paralleled by both the deification of the nature aesthetic in Thoreau's writings and the catharsis with man's

subconscious provided by the wilderness in Gothic literature. Through the shift into modernity, I will argue that the perception of the environment as deified has been continuously devalued as the changes of urbanism and industrialism have increasingly insulated society from the surrounding natural environment. In this manner, past versions of the nature/culture dichotomy are suppressed and the past deification of nature is portrayed as less rational and less relevant to the experience of contemporary America.

As a result of both the nostalgia that comes with historical research and an inclination towards the environmentalist politics of many of my sources, I have generally presented the interplay of past and present perceptions of nature in modernity in the terms of conflict, tragedy or unsettling ambiguity. Thus, the replacement of communal identity for an abstract national ideology is described as a process in which American culture has lost both its connection to communal mores, as celebrated in the early nineteenth century by Alexis de Tocqueville[2] and the sense of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency that Wendell Berry portrays as belonging to the agrarian culture of the frontier.[3] The sense of loss produced by modern culture's disconnection from nature touches the contemporary reading of frontier literature as well, as seen in the portrayal of pastoralism by Leo Marx whereby the American landscape is increasingly encroached upon by mechanization and development.[4] Even national monuments of sublime nature such as the Grand Canyon and Yosemite carry a sense of this loss as John Agnew and Jonathan Smith describe by labeling these natural spaces as scenes of "heroic nature," meaning that the sense of wonder they evoke is disconnected from interaction with their physical existence having more to do with the perceptions of the past.[5] Above all I will emphasize the conflict between the drive for continuous expansion and development – the search for ever new frontiers, and the glorification of divine American nature whose seemingly inevitable loss by modernity is a deep-felt tragedy of our contemporary experience.

The introduction to this work will present a general background of the following three themes: Turner's conception of the frontier as formative of a national American character, the conflict of past and present versions of the nature/culture dichotomy in contemporary

[2] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Volume 1,* ed. J.P. Mayer and Max Lerner, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper & Row, 1966)
[3] Wendell Berry, "The Agricultural Crisis as a Crisis of Culture," in the course compendium for NORAM 4579, University of Oslo (Oslo: Unipub AS, 2006)
[4] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
[5] John A. Agnew and Jonathan M. Smith, *American Space/American Place, Geographies of the Contemporary United States* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002)

American culture, and the various historical processes through which modernity has insulated society from the natural world. Through these themes I will set up my central thesis that although the perception of transcendent influences residing in nature finds continuing representation in American culture, the disconnection from the environment created by modernity has created a paradox in the traditional conception of American exceptionalism and Turner's description of the national character. This argument will then be developed through three chapters. The first two chapters will focus on the physical forces of modernization and the perspectives of contemporary criticism interpreting this transformation, while the last chapter will discuss the contemporary cultural presentation of past versions of the nature/culture dichotomy as influenced by the conditions of modernity.

Introduction

The Significance of Turner's Frontier Thesis for American Modernity

Faith in innovation, expansion, and the limitless possibilities of the future are often cited as inherent to the national character of the United States. The enumeration of American ideals and the conceptualization of a definable national character form the central theme of Frederick Jackson Turner's essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1890) in which he describes frontier experience as the key influence shaping American society. Historically, this description presented by Turner has been seen as unifying the American consciousness for the purpose of furthering the progress of societal development after the close of the frontier. The variety of virtues Turner cites as created by pioneer life are used to collectively support the dominant cultural theme of endless progress and unrestrained growth paralleling the modernization of America during the Gilded Age. "Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise."[6] During the frontier period this, by now, often criticized impulse to expand had been justified by a romanticized vision of America to be, both guided by the design of Manifest Destiny and humbled by the natural harshness of the continent. In Turner's America as created by the frontier, the impulse to expand was inseparable from its spiritual justification – the creation of a nation divinely sanctioned both by Christian virtues and the political ideals of the Enlightenment. Thus a sentimental religion of America's future underlies the pious simplicity of the pioneer mentality in Turner's writings, as evidenced by his description of the spirit of frontier exploration: "This quest after the unknown, this yearning "beyond the skyline, where the strange roads go down," is of the very essence of the backwoods pioneer, even though he was unconscious of its spiritual significance."[7]

Delivered at the closing of the frontier, Turner's use of pioneer experience to create a homogenous national ideology provided America with the means of furthering its impulse to expand in the highly competitive climate of the Gilded Age while seeming to remain true to the virtues of its agrarian past. As Alan Trachtenberg has noted in his *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, Turner's writings portray the frontier as a past stage of American development from which arose the political, economic and social

[6] Turner, 37.
[7] Turner, 271.

foundations for America's future. "To be sure, he [Turner] argued, the story of the frontier had reached its end, but the product of that experience remains. It remains in the predominant *character*, the traits of selfhood, with which the frontier experience had endowed Americans, that "dominant individualism" which now must learn to cope with novel demands."[8] In addition to providing an arena for the development of economic and political institutions the frontier evoked in the American character a certain reverence for nature in the belief that the environment played a dominant role in shaping pioneer culture. In closing, Turner writes

> There is not *tabula rasa*. The stubborn American environment is there with its imperious summons to accept its conditions; the inherited ways of doing things are also there; and yet, in spite of environment, and in spite of custom, each frontier did indeed furnish a new field of opportunity, a gate of escape from the bondage of the past; and freshness, and confidence, and scorn of older society, impatience of its restraints and its ideas, and indifference to its lessons, have accompanied the frontier.[9]

Through his description of the development of the American character as shaped by the frontier, Turner's assertion that the American continent was not a '*tabula rasa*' can be understood as an acknowledgement of qualities affecting culture attributed directly to the natural environment. Native American culture in Turner's essay is sometimes described along the lines of 'noble savagery,' at other times as violent in the absence of 'civilization,' but in both cases Turner indicates that many of the prominent characteristics of Native American cultures can be attributed to interaction with the land. Similarly Turner shifts rather seamlessly between describing the emerging Anglo American culture as influenced by Native American ways and descriptions of Anglo culture as taking on characteristics (also held by Native American cultures) forced upon it by dealing with a harsh wilderness. The implication is that American geography inevitably creates certain cultural forms. The American wilderness as described in Turner's essay, and as a common cultural perception of the frontier period, was not a *tabula rasa*, because it already contained an inherent design not created by humanity, a transcendent *telos* contained within the land itself.[10]

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[8] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 15.
[9] Turner, 38.
[10] The paintings of the Hudson River School are often cited as portraying this theme visually, equating the pastoral setting with the divine providence of the American continent. Painters of the Hudson River School combined realism with religious veneration of nature, believing that the "…artist who painted a landscape faithful to God's divine work was creating a visual sermon that would elevate all who viewed it. It was this belief that led to the sensational popularity of the Hudson River painters." Robert Myron and Abner Sundell, *Art in America, from Colonial Days through the Nineteenth Century* (London: Crowell-Collier Press, 1969), 102.

Turner's description of the continuation of character traits born on the frontier after its closing uses a three-part strategy: the cherishing of these character traits, a warning of the effects of their loss, and the assurance of viable avenues for their continued prominence as aspects of American culture in the newly emerging conditions of the Gilded Age. Through his enumeration of pioneer values brought about by interaction with the frontier, Turner's description internalizes the physical and social influence of American nature as a series of cultural traits; insulating the lessons of frontier experience as well as the impulse for continuous expansion against future critiques that would perceive America as disconnected from nature. Turner's internalization of the influences of the frontier as inherent to American culture will form a major theme in this thesis, and will be discussed as a key factor in the creation of contemporary America's view of nature as impacting society – both past and present. My hypothesis is that in the dominant culture of the 1800s there existed a belief in the shaping of society by transcendent influences inherent in the American environment which took both the role of *telos* (or design) for American culture and that of an active external agent in the form of natural forces. I will argue that because these transcendent influences formed the ethical justification for the frontier impulse[11] as well as a defining pillar of American exceptionalism, shifts in culture which created a perceived loss of connection to nature have had a profound effect on American cultural identity in the 20th century.

The idea of "modernity" (which will be explored as the main theme of the first chapter) will be used to describe the transition from agrarian to urban society after the frontier through which American culture seems to have reoriented itself away from its role as a part of the nature-culture divide. Separation from nature as an aspect of modernity is not entirely encapsulated by the explanation of modernization as the product of industrialization and urbanization, but also involves the cultural changes of the twentieth century reacting to the experience of these modernizing processes explained by Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash as "reflexive modernization."

> If simple… modernization means… first the disembedding and second the re-embedding of traditional social forms by industrial social forms, then reflexive modernization means first the disembedding and second the re-embedding of industrial forms by another modernity…. High-speed industrial dynamism is sliding into a new society without the primeval explosion of a revolution, bypassing political debates and decisions in parliaments and governments. Reflexive modernization,

[11]The desire to maintain a mystique of America as the land of plenty through incessant expansion, which I will refer to as the "frontier impulse" in this paper, will be defined as a national belief in the value of unrestrained growth facilitated in the modern age by the seemingly limitless possibilities for development provided by the abstraction of the world through the concept of modernity.

> then, is supposed to mean that a change of industrial society which occurs surreptitiously and unplanned in the wake of normal, automized modernization and with an unchanged, intact political and economic order implies the following: a *radicalization* of modernity, which breaks up the premises and contours of industrial society and opens paths to another modernity.[12]

While physical factors such as industrialization are key social transformations producing the experience of modernity, the perceived loss of a connection to nature also forms a critical element of contemporary American culture due to the historical importance of the frontier period.[13] American modernity will be dealt with in this paper as the product of three areas of transformation: the modernization of society produced by social factors (such as urbanization, industrialization, media technologies and the rise of political complexity), the reorientation of the frontier mentality from the development of empty lands towards the development potential provided by modern economic and cultural arenas (such as markets), and the ideological culture produced by the insulation of society and individual experience from an awareness of external natural forces.[14]

The modernization of America during the Gilded Age will be discussed at several points throughout this work as it involved a variety of key transitions including the conflict between isolationist and progressive politics at the close of the frontier, and the political purpose behind Turner's thesis.

> It was in the context of the economic downturn of the 1890s that the historian Frederick Jackson Turner… famously wrote of the impact of the frontier on American identity and culture. Celebrating the liberating and invigorating powers of the expanding frontier, Turner feared for the consequences of the "closing of the frontier" when all land was taken

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[12] Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 2-3. While I refer to the work of these authors here for an understanding of modernity's self-referencing effects on culture, the description of modern culture throughout this work diverges in many ways from their description.

[13] As Sigfried Gideon has noted, the frontier period also saw the beginning of the rapid decline of subsistence farming at the hand of the industrial revolution. "Within society the tiller of the soil is a link, a bond of union between man and the vitality of nature…. Thus the tiller of the soil is understood as the constant element within a civilization…. Until late into the nineteenth century the farmer was everywhere a home producer and home consumer, still embodying the archetype of sedentary mankind." The progressive expansion and urban industrialism which Turner's thesis was meant to initiate through the unification of American ideals therefore coincides with the beginning of the end for an even older cultural history than that produced by a century's isolationism – that of Western civilization as reflecting a predominantly agrarian culture before mechanization. Siegfried Gideon, *Mechanization Takes Command. A Contribution to Anonymous History*, 130-208, in the course compendium for NORAM 4579, University of Oslo (Oslo: Unipub AS, 2006), 161-2.

[14] Writing of the experience of the common man in a "post-traditional society," Giddens further elaborates on reflexive modernization by explaining that a buffer is created between man and nature by the "displacement and reappropriation of expertise." He explains that the increasing use of abstract systems and analytical terminology produced by specialization filters into common culture producing an often ambiguous and conflicting matrix between the individual and nature. Beck et al., 59-60

> and the American urge for growth and movement would consequently cease…. Renewed expansion was required in order to lower unemployment, reintegrate American labor into the American Dream and thus reduce the appeal of subversive politics. The issue of American expansion was not only an economic issue then, given that a moving frontier was the source of America's uniqueness – its Manifest Destiny, as it was first called in the 1840s – and that the United States could only achieve its full potential if it continued to expand.[15]

In relation to American expansion as exceeding the realm of economics Agnew and Smith describe, Turner's frontier thesis served the political purpose of hailing the dominant desire of the 1890s to expand internationally. For a century, the ever-moving frontier was a sign of work being done, a glorious culture in formation. And now, at its culmination, the closing of the frontier, the fear of losing the culture of the dynamo[16] of expansion expressed by Turner is pitted against the fear of losing the product of that labor (a burgeoning agrarian society idealized by Jefferson) in the dynamo itself. Thus at the time of the delivery of Turner's thesis American culture felt the pull of two opposing forces: a disappearing isolationist-oriented agrarian ideal which feared the loss of nature's divine influence and a progressive internationalist culture impatient to find new frontiers.

Trachtenberg sheds further light on this conflict, portraying Turner's thesis as an attempt at reconciling these opposing forces.

> …the Turner thesis… embraced the change – the rise of cities, industrial capitalism, corporate forms of business and social activities – and yet… attempted to preserve older values and traditional outlooks…. The thesis projects a national character, a type of person fit for the struggles and strategies of an urban future…. Turner's frontier, then, is as much an invention of cultural belief as a genuine historical fact: an invention of an America 'connected and unified' in the imagination if nowhere else.[17]

However, while the agrarian values of pioneer experience are preserved in Turner's thesis, his description of a definitive end of the frontier seems suggestive of a major tragic theme in American history – that of destroying, at first through culture and now through technology,

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[15] Agnew and Smith, 88.

[16] Many authors from the period of industrialization perceived machine technology as a Faustian development whose potential to further the designs of man eclipsed the Christian view of man's humble place in nature. Henry Adams writes of the dynamo as the quintessential symbol of mechanization in *The Education of Henry Adams*. "….he began to feel the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross. The planet itself seemed less impressive, in its old-fashioned, deliberate, annual or daily revolution, than this huge wheel, revolving within arm's length at some vertiginous speed…. Before the end, one began to pray to it; inherited instinct taught the natural expression of man before silent and infinite force." Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918), University of Virginia American Studies Program, 1995-1996, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/hadams/ha_home.html> (25 March 2008).

[17] Trachtenberg, 15-17.

that wilderness whose veneration is at the heart of America's national culture.[18] This tragic myth of destroying that nature functioning as the basis of American exceptionalism can be seen as a result of defining the land as representing room and resources for progress (a position supporting progressive international politics) as opposed to the land as representing an inherent transcendent design for the development of American culture in Turner's description of the continuing viability of the frontier impulse.[19] Though sublimated through the forces of modernization however, the historical perception of nature as divine often resurfaces in contemporary American culture to conflict with conditions of modernity that insulate American society from nature.

Partly due to his reverence for the economic theories of Achille Loria, Turner develops through the course of his essay a highly systematized set of dialectics to describe the development of American society occurring with westward expansion through a variety of sharply delineated cultural, economic and political spheres. "The unequal rate of advance compels us to distinguish the frontier into the trader's frontier, or the miner's frontier, and the farmer's frontier."[20] This separation of frontier development into separate spheres represents a spatial approach to history and cultural studies commensurate with the common current approach of discussing space according to its use-value in understanding specific subjects under study. Henri Lefebvre writes in his book *The Production of Space* that

> Specialized works keep their audience abreast of all sorts of equally specialized spaces: leisure, work, play, transportation, public facilities – all are spoken of in spatial terms…. We are thus confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global. Not to mention nature's (physical) space, the space of (energy) flows, and so on.[21]

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[18]Turner hints at this theme in his descriptions of the first wave of settlers, always moving from one frontier to the next. "The competition of the unexhausted, cheap, and easily tilled prairie lands compelled the farmer either to go west and continue the exhaustion of the soil on a new frontier, or to adopt intensive culture…. Thus the demand for land and the love of wilderness freedom drew the frontier ever onward" Turner, 21-2.

[19] Yi-Fu Tuan has written extensively on the varying cultural perceptions of nature produced by interaction with the environment around the globe. Exploring the perception of transcendent wilderness as divine in American history, he writes that the "…New England Puritans believed that they were inaugurating a new age of the Church in the New World and that this reformed Church was to blossom like a garden in the protective wilderness…. wilderness in America…. stood for the sublime and called man to contemplation; in its solitude one drifted into higher thoughts away from the temptations of Mammon…" Yi-Fu Tuan *Topophilia, A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 110-111.

[20] Turner, 12.

[21] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 8.

From this position, Lefebvre proceeds to expose the failure of modern criticism to acknowledge the larger "space" in which these separate areas of analysis find connection. Lefebvre describes the position of modern criticism as often claiming to occupy no space while providing a universal system of fragmenting relativism to account for all uses of specific spaces. Postmodernist and poststructuralist perspectives have been instrumental in creating a contemporary world-view that rejects the idea that there are external influences on culture beyond those influences originating in the human imaginary. Before this critical paradigm achieved dominance, a regular usage of the culture as mind metaphor created a perspective in which human history represented the development of humanity in relation to an external world (a perspective easily accommodating the perception of divine influences residing in nature). Writers such as Baudrillard and Foucault also rely on the culture as mind metaphor but have altered its presentation so that the cultural mind is seen as a closed system trapped by an inescapable inter-textuality that forecloses the possibility of new experience and even foresees the end of history. In his book *America*, Baudrillard writes

> The only question in this journey is: how far can we go in the extermination of meaning…. And the crucial moment is that brutal instant which reveals that the journey has no end, that there is no longer any reason for it to come to an end…. Movement which moves through space of its own volition changes into an absorption by space itself… the jet engine is no longer an energy of space-penetration, but propels itself by creating a vacuum in front of it that sucks it forward, instead of supporting itself, as in the traditional model, upon the air's resistance…[22]

The culture as mind metaphor worked under structuralism because culture was still distinguished from the world, but, as Lefebvre points out (and as is indicated by this quote from Baudrillard), under post-structuralism/post-modernism, culture and the world have become synonymous in the individual leaving no world outside the human designed *telos* of the cultural mind. This theoretical rejection of the external world can be seen as a product of the ideological culture occurring with modernity. And while the frontier impulse finds new areas for expansion and development in the age of modernity, its original connection to the transcendent influences of nature are lost through this process of abstraction. Therefore while the experience of deified nature is produced by culture, there seems a tendency to view its evocation by natural forms as the simulation of past cultural viewpoints drawn from an inescapable web of post-modern inter-textuality, rather than as a new cultural production.

[22] Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1999), 10-11.

Thus a key aspect of modernity's creation of a culture of ideology is the development of a post-modern viewpoint in which the many past "spaces" of history exist in a cultural flux, combined and recombined not for the purpose of generating a structurally tight, universal picture of history, but rather as divided by the specific use-value of modern critics – their presentation defining particular subjects under study. However, as the many themes from past social spaces were not conceived under this paradigm, their meaning is often taken out of context. Long-standing traditions developed by frontier culture, older cultural meanings of the term 'wilderness,' and the presentation of agrarian life by pre-twentieth century pastoral literature may all be described as caught up in the same dilemma that Alasdair MacIntyre has attributed to ethics in the modern age.

> Imagine that the natural sciences were to suffer the effects of a catastrophe…. Later…enlightened people seek to revive science, although they have largely forgotten what it was. But all that they possess are fragments…. For everything that they do and say conforms to certain canons of consistency and coherence and those contexts which would be needed to make sense of what they are doing have been lost, perhaps irretrievably…. The hypothesis which I wish to advance is that in the actual world which we inhabit the language of morality is in the same state of grave disorder as the language of natural science in the imaginary world which I described…. I cannot of course deny, indeed my thesis entails, that the language and the appearances of morality persist even though the integral substance of morality has to a large degree been fragmented and then in part destroyed.[23]

Though MacIntyre's metaphor is concerned with reconstructing historically accurate lines of argumentation in the history of Western ethical philosophy, the confusion of past belief systems by modern inter-textuality presented in his metaphor can also be used to understand the problem of accurately portraying agrarian perceptions of the frontier era in contemporary American culture. Politics, economics, perceptions of nature, the relationship of the individual to society – all aspects of the experience of life predating modernity are easily misunderstood by the simulations and inter-textuality of modern cultural forms. Lawrence Buell has written extensively of the need to resolve this dilemma in relation to the perceived loss of nature in American culture by deconstructing the multiple layers of meaning and interpretation attributed to the American pastoral tradition, arguing that "…an 'ideological grammar' of American pastoral cannot stop at trying to make distinctions among different categories of work. It must also recognize the crosscurrents that keep any one example from

[23] Alisdaire MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 1-5.

seeming pure…"[24] Depictions of nature's transcendent influences as a part of both frontier culture and pastoral experience persist in our understanding of American history, maintaining a link with the previous ethical validation of American values and social development, while also clashing with the conception that American culture has lost its connection with nature.

Through a preservation of these cultural perspectives by the conception of a coherent national character presented in Turner's thesis, the frontier period has assumed an almost mythic status in the modern age. Portrayals of the socially formative and generative qualities of the frontier period associate the pioneer experience with a virtuous past age in which American culture was guided by the Manifest Destiny of the continent. For the pioneer the perception of frontier development as formative can be seen as combining two distinct ethical mandates. The first is to tear down the false or debilitating aspects of past culture, to allow the American environment to reeducate the soul with the purity of primitivism (as associated with those aspects of Native American culture perceived as noble by Turner). At the same time there existed a mandate to civilize the negative aspects of the primitive (both the land and its inhabitants) with Christian culture. Though coexisting in the myth of the frontier, these two mandates present competing visions of the spatial location of transcendent design – in the primitivism that instructs culture versus the civilization that educates primitivism. And yet both essentially occupy the same abstract space of cosmic design or a belief in ideal forms that intersects the culture/nature divide. Turner often asserts that American culture emerging out of the West contained both good and evil elements as a result of the encounter with primitive conditions, and yet he takes both at face value: his 'scientific' approach an excuse not to question the path laid out by Manifest Destiny. "His [the frontiersman's] was … the ideal of conserving and developing what was original and valuable in this new country…. It [the West] saw in its growth nothing less than a new order of society and state. In this conception were elements of evil and elements of good."[25]

The view of the frontier as formative of modern culture is related to the idea that the American continent represented an undeveloped space with a high potential for exploitation and profit, seeming to promise room for the pioneers to develop their own cultural future. But while frontier ideals have persisted, the concept of frontier experience as formative and past implies that the use-value of the continent has now been determined. The mythos of the frontier might thus seem to tell a story of a time in history (the pioneer experience) in which

[24] Lawrence Buell, "American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised," *American Literary History*, Vol. 1, No. 1. (Spring, 1989): 1-29, online via JSTOR, <www.jstor.org/> (31 July 2006), 19-20.
[25] Turner, 210-11.

man was truly at a crossroads with free will to determine his future. This theoretical frontier mythos brings to light the ontological conflict between historical determinism and the elevation of free will from an individual to a cultural level. In this description, westward movement is seen both as a steadily increasing detachment from European culture as well as the transformation of space into place[26] with frontier culture as the willful agent surgically excluding those cultural traits not predetermined in the grand plan for America. As such the modern myth of the frontier often evokes the feeling that America is now exceptional, a new civilization rather than the result of the slow transformation of European culture. But if the frontier has acted in the formation of modern American culture then it follows that modern America is bound to the experience of a previous era. Consequently the moment of free will to choose fate has passed and the absolute political freedom cited by the founding fathers (and continuously reiterated thereafter) has been canonized to preserve an already existing historical line; and in the process this freedom has become devoid of meaning. Yet the conception of absolute political freedom often persists in modern American culture, one of many ideals shaped by unique conditions belonging to a lost American past.[27] Thus, contemporary America has not only become divorced from the deification of nature prominent in frontier culture, but also from the new-world promise of political freedom which incited many of the pioneer traits Turner attributes to the national character. Nature, frontier experience, and the perception of the world as containing divine forces have all been relegated to the subconscious of America's cultural memory, suppressed by the closed-system rationality of modernity.

This work will be primarily concerned with exploring the shift of cultural perceptions of nature in America separating the frontier and modernization periods. Modernity will be discussed both as redefining the historical analysis of past cultural experience and, conversely, as containing elements of past cultural attitudes whose understanding has become ambiguous. Three essays will be examined that illuminate important transformations in the relationship of culture to nature coinciding with the development of modernity: "From

[26] The development of American society through westward expansion described as the transformation of space into place forms one of the central themes of *American Space/American Place* by Agnew and Smith.

[27] Alternatively, while conventional political doctrine conservatively maintains the intentions of the founding fathers, the frontier impulse for change and development makes Americans seemingly accepting of wide-reaching social changes. Thus industrial farming was left relatively unchallenged by sufficient government subsidies for small farmsteads in the early twentieth century, and the increasingly nomadic lifestyle of families forced to chase employment across the nation is not made a major part of policy discussion in political elections. While Turner's national character may often seem conservative, actual ties to traditional and local culture are regularly sacrificed in American history to follow the doctrine of continuous change.

Transcendence to Obsolescence: A Route Map" by Harold Fromm,[28] "American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised" by Lawrence Buell, and "American Landscapes of Terror: From the First Captivity Tales to Twentieth-Century Horror Stories" by Paul Neubauer.[29] The first essay that I will examine by Fromm deals with a shift in man's perception of his own capabilities and place in the world orchestrated by the development of technology, and will be used to explore dominant forces in the emergence of the concept of modernity. In this essay Fromm describes the transformation from man's self definition as a part of nature (painfully subject to its influences while, through religion, "mind" is glorified as the path to freedom) – to a self-definition of man as defined by mind in opposition to nature. The second essay, by Buell, is concerned with deconstructing critical positions attempting to define the politics surrounding pastoral literature. Through Buell's essay, I will analyze the reinterpretation of pastoral literature and agrarian society during the nineteenth century by modern criticism conditioned by the effects of modernity. The last essay that I will examine, by Neubauer, explores a succession of literary depictions of nature as terrifying and/or antagonistic to the development of the continent and the progression of American culture. By comparing his analysis of various works of literature to artistic representations of nature in the twentieth century, a sublimated awareness of past forms of the relationship between nature and culture (lost through the shift into modernity) resurfaces in a variety of dissonant, tragic and horrifying forms.[30] Both Turner's conception of the frontier as formative of a national American character and the ideological culture resulting from modernity's insulation from nature will form central themes throughout this work. I intend to show that though the perception of transcendent influences residing in nature finds continuing representation in modern America, the disconnection from the environment created by modernity has created a paradox in the contemporary understanding of American exceptionalism and the national character as conceived by Turner.

In the first chapter, Fromm's description of the shift from the use of mind as a tool to survive in nature to a self-definition of man as mind in opposition to nature will be used to explore the development of the concept of modernity in American culture. Fromm's

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[28] Harold Fromm, "From Transcendence to Obsolescence: A Route Map," in *The Ecocriticism Reader, Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996)

[29] Paul Neubauer, "American Landscapes of Terror: From the First Captivity Tales to Twentieth-Century Horror Stories, " in *"Nature's Nation" Revisited, American Concepts of Nature from Wonder to Ecological Crisis*, ed. Hans Bak and Walter W. Holbling (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2003)

[30] In addition to their varying content, the political positions of these three essays are useful to the discussion of modernity's emergence in that, as environmentally activist, all three authors wish to present the environment as an external force of some sort and thus subvert the perception of a disconnection from nature.

description of the insulation of culture through urbanization and the industrial revolution presents a world defined by social interaction in which the influences of nature for the common man have diminished. Arguing that technology and the buildup of complex society have muted our relationship to natural forces, he asserts that the world is now principally defined by human design or 'mind' in American modernity. For Fromm, this new dominance of mind is the culmination of a long-standing theme in Western civilization of deifying reason as a result of the hardships of the natural environment.

> The idealized emphasis on 'rational' in the concept of man as the rational animal which characterized Platonic-Christian thought for two millennia had generally been the product of man's sense of his own physical weakness, his knowledge that Nature could not be tamed or bent to his own will. In lieu of the ability to mold Nature to serve his own ends, man had chosen to extol and deify that side of his being that seemed to transcend Nature by inhabiting universes of thought that Nature could not naysay.[31]

The world described by Fromm offers room for a discussion not only of how mechanization affects our connection to nature, but of how the cultural theories developed to explain mechanization have created our ideological conception of the world in the 20th century. [32] Liberation from the hardships of nature through the distancing of the physical world by modernity brings with it the construction of a modern paradigm in which the individual's mental space is increasingly seen as connected to outside forces (in the life of the urban world, primarily of human design) and thus less capable of providing space truly external of the cultural sphere. This chapter will explore the separation from nature occurring with the changes in culture produced by technological development, urbanization, and the detachment from communal identity as a continuation of Turner's proposal that innovation and markets would act as a replacement for the frontier in the modern age.

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[31] Fromm, 30.

[32] Sigfried Gideon has argued that the process of industrialization overlaps the age of the frontier, meaning that the movement westward was a movement through history toward a future that would make the frontier and its culture obsolete. "The sudden leap from wilderness to an advanced stage of mechanization, intermediary phases being passed over…. The leap from a primitive, colonial mode of living into highly organized mechanization is typical for the whole American development." Gideon, 141-4. Thus, the shift Fromm describes from the dominance of the use of hand to the use of mind in the individual's relationship to the world parallels a similar shift in the orientation of American society from populating and exploiting the natural resources of the continent through the individual frontiersman to insulating the individual from the environment through urbanization and industrialization.

Foreshadowing the themes of his book *The Environmental Imagination*,[33] Buell's essay is concerned with rescuing the concept of our ability to have a connection with nature from the large body of criticism that questions the political motivations of pastoral literature. By deconstructing critical positions in pastoral literature, Buell attempts in his essay to resurrect the perception of nature as external of cultural definitions in the de-anthropomorphized form of eco-centricism. Buell's essay is useful for a discussion of the criticisms emanating from modern American culture in two ways. Firstly, in defending our ability to connect with nature Buell critiques postmodern and poststructuralist interpretations that oversimplify the meaning of pastoral narratives. Secondly, Buell attacks interpretations of nature's transcendent influences in pastoral literature that portray pastoral politics as contained entirely within culture (the position that the critic never occupies a space separate from that he criticizes) as well as interpretations of pastoral experience as predominantly a means of expressing and mediating societal alienation.[34] As a cultural manifestation of pioneer ideals, pastoralism has acted as an important locus throughout American history for expressing the varied experience of nature occurring during the frontier period. As Buell has argued, American pastoralism contains widely diversified themes exploring the American relationship to the environment, and as such contains several dichotomies, not least of which is the ever-present conflict between pastoral as escapist and antisocial versus pastoral as conservative in its agrarianism. Through Buell's essay, the conflict between the loss of a connection to nature and the historic use of nature as divine to support American exceptionalism can be seen as expressed in the interplay between nineteenth century pastoral literature and contemporary criticism.

The last essay that I will deal with as analyzing the effects of modernity is Paul Neubauer's "American Landscapes of Terror: From the First Captivity Tales to Twentieth-Century Horror Stories." Neubauer's essay traces the history of antagonistic depictions of nature in American literature. Essentially dealing with three forms of the nature/culture relationship, Neubauer's essay describes a slow process whereby themes of threatening wilderness are sublimated through the shift into modernity. In colonial literature, nature's threats take the form of an impediment to social development standing in opposition to Manifest Destiny and the belief in pioneer adaptability. In Gothic literature, the wilderness comes to represent the savagery of the human subconscious and the nature/culture

[33] Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995).
[34] Buell, "American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised,"18-23.

relationship acts as a means of providing man with a deeper understanding of the human condition. Neubauer closes with a discussion of H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos in the early twentieth century through which the savagery and subconscious associations of wilderness are sublimated by the loss of a direct cultural connection to nature. Neubauer's essay parallels Turner's description of the frontier's persistence as a cultural trait in its assertion that American nature as a threatening force remains a constant factor in our cultural perceptions up to the present day. At the same time his position can be seen to criticize Turner's belief in the value of expansion in that the trade-off for America's progressive frontier ideals has always been a fear of the dangers of unknown natural forces. Throughout my analysis of Neubauer's essay, contemporary representations of the nature/culture relationship will be discussed in order to show that past perceptions of nature persist in American culture though altered by the conditions of modernity.

Shifts in the relationship of American culture to nature produced by the experience of modernity will thus be explored in relation to these three essays. Throughout, the national ideology put forth by Turner will be cited as a key transition separating the frontier period from the twentieth century. In the first two chapters, the physical forces of modernization and the perspectives of contemporary criticism will be used to analyze fundamental changes in the nature/culture relationship, while the third chapter will explore the persistence of past cultural viewpoints concerning nature altered by modernity. The creation of an ideological culture and the loss of a connection to nature will be shown as collectively producing a deep-felt conflict in American culture's relationship to the national traits of character produced by the frontier period.

Chapter 1

Modernity and American Culture: Industrialization, Urbanization and Frontier Values as Critiqued by Harold Fromm's Essay "From Transcendence to Obsolescence: A Route Map"

Modernization as interpreted by social critics often describes the effects of industrialization, urbanization and increasing social complexity resulting from new technologies as producing an understanding in the common man of the world as more connected with social forces than the previous understanding of the world as the space of natural laws. Written primarily as an appeal for greater awareness of modern environmental concerns, Harold Fromm's essay, "From Transcendence to Obsolescence: A Route Map," (1978) frames the changes in culture occurring with the industrial revolution in the context of the classic philosophical discussion of the mind-body problem. In his description, the mind is externalized through the transition into a complex technological society creating a conception of the world around us as abstracted from its physical existence in the sense that man's experience seems more connected to modes of social interaction than to engagement with nature. With the advent of technology providing a buffer against the antagonism of nature's forces, Fromm argues that man has finally achieved dominance over his own destiny. He asserts that this transition has subsequently allowed man to supplant nature with technology as the primary influence over human action in his description of the functioning of the world around him.[35]

> …in the early days, man had no power over Nature and turned, instead, to his mind and its gods for consolation. Meanwhile, his mind produces a technology that enables his body to be as strong as the gods, rendering the gods superfluous and putting Nature in a cage. Then it appears that there is no Nature and that man has produced virtually everything out of his own ingenuity…. Nature, whose effects on man were formerly immediate, is now *mediated* by technology so that it appears that technology and not Nature is actually responsible for everything. This has given to man a sense that he mentally and voluntarily determines the ground of his own existence and that his body is almost a dispensable

[35] Karl Marx has referred to the replacement of nature by capital as the emergence of a "second nature," thus foreshadowing the conditions of modernity described by Fromm. It might be argued that this shift is the inevitable consequence of the growth of technical science and the glorification of the "Age of Man" during the Enlightenment. Marx's concept of capital as a "second nature" is discussed in "George Seddon and Karl Marx: Nature and Second Nature" by Peter Beilharz. Thesis Eleven (2003), <http://the.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/74/1/21> (25 March 2008)

> adjunct of his being. This is modern man's own peculiar mythology: The Myth of Voluntary Omnipotence.[36]

As I have discussed in the introduction, cultural disconnection from nature as an element of the shift into modernity can be understood as a second phase of modernization, identified as "reflexive" in that it results not directly from the institutional changes of modernization but rather from the changes in perception arising from culture's reaction to modernization.[37] A discussion of Fromm's essay provides room not only for an examination of culture's transformation by rapidly developing industrialization, urbanization, communication and transportation, but also for how theories created to understand these developments have often described society in mechanical terms, collectively producing a conception of the modern world that Fromm describes as an externalization of mind. Though writing before the era of reflexive modernization, Turner's prediction that economic development and expansion would continue unheeded in America after the closing of the frontier is verified by a modern economy that produces seemingly endless innovations in research, technological development and industry.[38] Fromm's description of man's relationship with nature existing before modernization, which in the U.S. can be associated with the period of frontier development, is a relationship of predominantly empirical definitions based on use-value and constantly reinforced by the physical transformation of nature. He does not seek to prove that we have ceased to define the environment in terms of use-value, but rather that our definition of the world has, for the common man, been severed from actual engagement with nature. Fromm argues that this has affected the relationship between mind and body as well, in that, as the world around us is now viewed as a predominantly social and technological system, the mind is no longer commonly perceived as a tool for conquering the physical world.[39] Essentially,

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[36] Fromm, 35.

[37] Again I refer to *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* by Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash.

[38] As I have mentioned in the introduction, this is an element of Turner's proposition that, in relation to the pioneer ideals in American culture, the frontier as a social force has been internalized as a cultural trait.

[39] Following from my discussion of Alisdair MacIntyre in the introduction, it is my contention that such shifts are never absolute as the historical development (or progression) of cultures and consciousness seems to me to be better understood as an organic process in which traits are not supplanted by new development but rather built upon through the evolution of history. Though the mind may no longer be predominantly viewed as a tool to conquer nature, I find it obvious that it is still viewed as a tool to manipulate the world around us, however that world is defined. That the avenues of possibility in the world around us are often mental (existing in the space of culture) seems to create an experience through which the individual mind interfaces directly with social consciousness, as a personal computer interfaces with the world-wide web. That a degree of social angst is created by this experience through a perception of the mind as connected to outside forces, and thus less capable of providing space for the individual to act or exist independent from the cultural sphere, may be seen as evidence of the conflict between the needs of the individual and his role in society, that also forms a central

Fromm's essay provides a viewpoint whereby, having struggled in nature through the majority of human history, man has finally been given the opportunity by technology to escape his bonds and make a home in the mind that he had always glorified through religion and philosophy.

While Fromm's essay is written as an evaluation of the shift into modernity within the entire Western world (and does not always address American history specifically), his conception of modernity is in many ways similar to Turner's description of the continuation of the frontier as a cultural trait in America after the end of its physical influence. However, Turner's description differs from Fromm's in that while Fromm sees the realm of mind as modernity's means of retreating from nature, Turner views the realm of mind as an optimistic avenue to new frontiers. In both descriptions, modernity involves the focus of society inwards upon itself. For Turner this insulation has allowed American society to search for potential areas of development in new means of ordering and explaining social interaction. The impetus for growth (previously seen as physical expansion during the era of the frontier) would, for Turner, now be spurred on by the benefits produced by increased commerce, urbanization and industry. Thus, through the rewarding of innovation by market forces, the mental frontiers of a new age seemed both limitless and endlessly fertile. In a contemporary criticism of this process, Fromm's description of modernity's disconnection from the physical world can be seen as resulting from the reinvention of the world by social and technological terms creating a closed loop in which modernity seems often incapable of looking beyond the social realm to define the purposes behind modern practices and institutions.

In this chapter I will examine how Fromm's criticism of modernity can be used to interpret the transition foreshadowed by Turner of the cultural role of the frontier as a source of values based on interaction with the environment carried into an age where man's relationship to nature is less evident. I will begin with an exploration of the effects of the loss of the frontier on the development of industry and technology as well as the effects of industrial and technological development on American social structure. As urbanization has historically paralleled industrialization, I will next discuss the changing power balance between rural and urban interests as American social structure shifted towards the concerns of cities in the Gilded Age. Lastly, I will analyze the conflict between communal and individual-oriented conceptions of democracy resulting from urbanization, industrialization and the buildup of complex society. In addition to placing Fromm's criticism of modernity in

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theme in Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930). Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, ed. James Strachey, trans. James Strachey (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1961)

the context of American history, this chapter will examine Fromm's description of the dangers created by a modern disconnection with nature as a commentary on Turner's conception of the replacement of the frontier by markets and industry as the primary motivation for social progress.

As I have already suggested, Turner predicted that industry and emerging technologies would form a new frontier with the market acting as an impetus for growth. This conception of a new kind of frontier, driven by the social forces of the 1890s, would prove to be a key factor in the production of the experience of modernity discussed by Fromm. However, between the respective time periods of Turner and Fromm lies the development of a vast array of new media technologies without which Fromm's description of a society dominated by mind cannot be fully understood. A discussion of Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964)[40] fills this gap by exploring the effects on social structure of these new technologies in a manner paralleling Turner's discussion of the social effects of capitalist competition during the Gilded Age.

In his essay "Social Forces in American History" which examines the decades surrounding the turn of the Twentieth century, Turner writes "The passage of the arable public domain into private possession…. Is peculiarly the era when competitive individualism in the midst of vast unappropriated opportunities changed into the monopoly of the fundamental industrial processes by huge aggregations of capital as the free lands disappeared."[41] He explains this conglomeration of industrial wealth as the product of values developed during the frontier period having facilitated a political climate ideal to the rapid buildup of complex industry even though the factor of empty land no longer acted as a key impetus for competition. Citing a petition to the federal government by the railroad industry aiming to prevent anti-trust legislation, Turner reveals how the industrial sector used the language of pioneer culture to appeal to American popular sentiment: "This is an appeal to the historic ideals of Americans who viewed the republic as the guardian of individual freedom to compete for the control of the natural resources of the nation."[42] Explaining that the market for innovations provided a viable alternative to further the progression of America along a historical line cohesive with those values of the frontier he viewed as key to American identity, Turner's description of the symbiotic relationship between market forces and pioneer ideals during this period can be divided into two stages of social analysis. First, Turner

[40] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964).
[41] Turner, 317-8.
[42] Turner, 319.

describes the effects of frontier values on the political culture of the Gilded Age as supporting the rapid development of industry. And second he explains the alteration of American social structure with regards to further development caused by the replacing of the competition for empty land with a new climate of high competition in industry.

In an analysis paralleling Turner's in form, McLuhan's book also discusses the connection of frontier era political ideals to the development of industry (predominantly media technology) and the subsequent effects of industrial innovation on social structure. Though he explores media technologies before the twentieth century as well, McLuhan focuses primarily on the developments of radio, cinema and television, arguing that these technologies have contributed an entirely new dimension to the developments of industrial modernization. His book was widely hailed as exploring a new era in which both human social interaction and self-understanding are more heavily influenced by electronic media. McLuhan writes in the introduction,

> After three thousand years of explosion, by means of fragmentary and mechanical technologies, the Western world is imploding. During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned.[43]

The connection of media technology (and the electronic mediation of culture) to the abolition of space is often considered one of the main causes of globalization in contemporary dialogue. At the same time, the separation of man from the physical environment in this description echoes Fromm's criticism of modernity in that both authors describe new means of communication and experience created by our ability to interact with culture (and thus social consciousness) without seeming to affect the natural environment around us. Fromm writes:

> With Nature barely in evidence and man's physical needs satisfied beyond what could be imagined one hundred years ago, man's mind would appear to have arrived at a state of altogether new autonomy and independence… a mind so assured of its domination of Nature and its capacity to satisfy the flesh that it seems to be borne up on its own engine of Will, cut off from any nurturing roots in the earth.[44]

Fromm's statement that man's will is now more connected to a social understanding of the world (rather than a physical understanding) reveals that the changes in social interaction

[43] McLuhan, 19.
[44] Fromm, 34.

foreshadowed by Turner's suggestion that pioneer values created during the era of the frontier would be redefined by the abstract social terminology of markets.

The perception that social progress is facilitated by technological development in America has long been connected to the political ideal of the value of competition developed on the frontier. In the 20th century, a climate of open competition provided by laissez-faire federal policies had created a system in which the advancement of media technology is primarily financed by advertisement. Explaining this process in relation to the press, McLuhan writes that "… our press is in the main a free entertainment service paid for by advertisers who want to buy readers…"[45] This connection of competition in industry to the pioneer spirit is also evident in the developments of TV and radio in which the air waves (a public resource) were awarded to private corporations for the purpose of developing new technologies.[46]

However, just as the culture of the frontier influenced the development of media technology, media technologies have subsequently recreated American social structure. McLuhan writes of radio that "…while radio contracts the world to village dimensions, it hasn't the effect of homogenizing the village quarters…. Radio is not only a mighty awakener of archaic memories, forces, and animosities, but a decentralizing pluralistic force…"[47] Subsequently, as the dominance of radio was usurped by television, he writes that: "…the TV image has exerted a unifying synesthetic force on the sense-life of… intensely literate populations…. It has affected the totality of our lives, personal and social and political…"[48] Thus the relationship of culture to technological progress is one of cross-fertilization in both the writings of Turner and McLuhan: a two-way street in which culture influences the arena of technological development and new technologies reorganize the structure of culture in response. The increase in information afforded by electronic media in the 20th century has allowed social analysis concerned with the effects of technology a greater influence over common perceptions of American culture.

As inventions and the advance of technology are scattered across time and space in relation to a wide variety of needs and ventures, it is difficult to discuss the concept of modernity on the basis technological advancement alone. Also important to the creation of

[45] McLuhan, 186.
[46] James MacGregor Burns et al., *Government By the People* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1998), 347.
[47] McLuhan, 267.
[48] McLuhan, 274-6. McLuhan considers transportation technologies for their effects on communication and social interaction as well as media technologies in his book. He writes of the railroad: "It is to the railroad that the American city owes its abstract grid layout, and the non-organic separation of production, consumption, and residence…" 103.

modernity has been the ideologues that have marched alongside technological progress analyzing the influence of new technologies on social institutions with an eye toward either glorifying or warning of where the future is leading us.[49] McLuhan's book is this type of work, as much social philosophy as a history of technology.[50] Politically, electronic media's influence on culture is often associated with the fear of media's use as a tool for controlling public opinion. Critics of the use of television ad campaigns in political elections have long feared the effects that electronic communication would have on the democratic process and today, fair elections are often measured by an equivalent length of airtime. In the 1990s, theorists began to discuss the world-wide web as creating a new public sphere with the potential of returning control over political debate to the individual.[51]

All of these examples of the effects of media technology on social structure and cultural dialogue can be seen to parallel Turner's understanding of markets as usurping the frontier's role as the driving force of social development in that they signify a belief that common social activity has, for more than a century, been increasingly defined by the individual's direct relationship with society, while his relationship with the natural world (as a part of the understanding of his role within society) has decreased. For McLuhan this process is understood primarily as the direct extension of man's consciousness into the social arena through electronic media. That social definitions of the world around us have supplanted definitions connected to the natural world forms a key element of Fromm's essay.

> To the average child of the United States in the present day Nature is indeed a great mystery, not insofar as it is incomprehensible but insofar as it is virtually nonexistent to his perceptions…. Even the child's most primitive natural functions are minimally in evidence and it is not surprising that various psychological problems turn up later on in life when man's sensual nature has in some way been concealed at every point by technology.[52]

The connection of Fromm's vision of culture as insulated from nature to McLuhan's observations concerning the social consequences of media technology becomes even clearer

[49] Alvin Tofler's concept of the study of futurism is one such example of this sort of ideologue. See Alvin Toffler, ed., *The Futurists* (New York: Random House Inc., 1972).
[50] Though many have argued that it is elitist to understand mass culture according only to the social theory of academic discussion, it is an unavoidable fact that such discussion becomes a part of mass culture through the understanding of theoretical dialogues by a culture's artisans.
[51] Jurgen Habermas has written extensively of the salons of the eighteenth century as a public sphere in which access to political debate allowed for a more democratic social structure. Habermas himself denies that the internet functions in the same manner as the salons of the 18th century, describing it as a "secondary public sphere," useful in promoting democratic discussion but subject to higher authority. "Towards a European Public Sphere (interview within an interview)" (2007) <http://www.networkcultures.org/geert/towards-a-european-public-sphere-interview-with-an-interiew/> (25 March, 2008)
[52] Fromm, 33.

through an understanding of how mechanization and automation have each influenced the interdependence of individuals and the homogenization of social experience. In his essay "The Agricultural Crisis as a Crisis of Culture" (1977), Wendell Berry explores the decline of traditional skills accompanying the rise of mechanization. Berry writes

> From a cultural point of view, the movement from the farm to the city involves a radical simplification of mind and character….For a complex responsibility he [the farmer] has substituted a simple dutifulness….There seems to be a rule that we can simplify our society – that is, make ourselves free – only by undertaking tasks of great mental and cultural complexity.[53]

In Berry's description the long and difficult task of learning agricultural self-sufficiency in a farming culture has been substituted by specialization, necessitating an increasingly complex social structure to meet the needs of the individual once provided by his own knowledge of traditional skills. The freedom accompanying responsibility for the self-sufficient farmer has also been lost to some extent, such that when Fromm speaks of man's separation from nature through an "engine of his own will," he speaks of a will no longer contained within the individual. The cultural will of social mechanisms that holds together the specialized skills of individuals after mechanization is a direct result of the increase in complexity of social institutions created through market innovation.

McLuhan further explores the social changes of specialization by differentiating between the separate effects of automation and mechanization.

> The restructuring of human work and association was shaped by the technique of fragmentation that is the essence of machine technology. The essence of automation technology is the opposite. It is integral and decentralist in depth, just as the machine was fragmentary, centralist, and superficial in its patterning of human relationships.[54]

Thus, according to McLuhan, automation has a homogenizing effect on culture in the simplification of complex diversified skills made necessary by the previous phase of mechanization towards a common experience of occupation.[55] However, where the agri-*culture* predating mechanization cited by Berry held a commonality of traditional skills tied to nature, the commonalities of modern society are more often dominated by urban forms of

[53] Wendell Berry, "The Agricultural Crisis as a Crisis of Culture," in the course compendium for NORAM 4579, University of Oslo (Oslo: Unipub AS, 2006), 30-1.
[54] McLuhan, 23.
[55] This is a truth of the common man in a society dominated by service industries, however, man's technical skills continue to develop with the complexity of his tools as evidenced by professions such as computer programming and chemical engineering.

entertainment and leisure activities.[56] While the closing of the frontier accompanied the rise of cities and industry during the Gilded Age, rural communities would continue to dominate the American cultural landscape for roughly another half century. The next section will explore the rising dominance of urban interests in American culture during the twentieth century as equally important to the creation of a conception of modernity as the effects of technology on social structure.

A key issue in discussing the concept of modernity as (in part) the product of America defined according to market interests is the business-oriented urban-centrism which seems to deny any intrinsic value to rural experience beyond the use-value of land as economic resource. In many ways the removal of actual rural experience from the public eye (and to a great extent subsequent historical interpretation) can be understood as the product of America's focus on cities and industry, as modernity seems more directly related to the mechanical descriptions of urban experience than the organic descriptions of rural life. The role of interpreting and defining American culture given to the universities in Turner's writing reveals one way in which America's agrarian voice became muted with the rise of cities. At one point in his book *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (1982) Trachtenberg discusses what he views as Turner's strategy in proscribing increased attention to the mentality of the West as the product of a past relationship with nature in which the land was not principally defined as economic resource. Writing of Turner's call for more attention to the history of Western development, Trachtenberg remarks:

> Connectedness, wholeness, unity: these narrative virtues, with their implied telos of closure, of a justifying meaning at the end of the tale, Turner would now embody in the language of historical interpretation... an interpretation not merely accurate according to the canons of historical writing but serviceable according to the needs of politics and culture: the needs of the nation at a moment of crisis…. Turner urged his fellow historians to break with "eastern" intellectual proclivities, to pay more mind to "western" experience….If the frontier has provided the defining experience for Americans, how would the values learned in that experience now fare in the new world of cities – a new world brought into being as if blindly by the same forces which had proffered the apparent gift of land?.... The prominence Turner gives to character, to a "composite nationality," in the resounding conclusion of the essay, clarifies his strategy. His response to the crisis of having reached the end of the frontier story shows in the meaning he gives to "land," treating it as he does less as an economic resource… than as an environmental force, virtually as a character in its own right.[57]

[56] Berry, 26.

[57] Trachtenberg, 13-6.

Thus while Turner seemed to recognize that the future of America lay in the realm of economics and market evolution, he emphasized the importance of the West as a means of maintaining the connection of pioneer values to intrinsic qualities of the land. The West seems to represent in Turner's writing a counterforce to the view of nature as predominantly economic resource, a view ascribed by Turner mainly to the urban centers of the eastern seaboard, but which would seem to grow more wide-spread in America's urban-centric future.[58] However, while Turner appears concerned with the problem of elitism based on urban, market and Eastern political interests, his solution focuses primarily on the role of universities in creating an accurate and inclusive vision of American culture rather than turning to the voice of western communities themselves. In his essay "Pioneer Ideals and the State University," Turner explores the relationship of "primitive" frontier ideals to both economic and political elitism (which he views as potentially threatening democracy), and to anti-elitism (which might use such ideals to threaten progress).[59] At the end of the essay Turner argues for the need to keep state universities free from the influence of commerce and politics by representing academia's search for knowledge as an open-ended vastness (like the frontier) in which the academician searches for truth in a way not dissimilar from the search for the good life concerning the pioneer. Here then is faith from Turner in the replacing of the realm of mind for the frontier as a means of guidance for the development of American society and its institutions. He charges the state universities with the responsibility of not only pursuing impartial inquiry but of acting as society's moral guide. Although this involves "preserving the consciousness of the past," the vast majority of his proscriptions for the proper role of universities involve continually finding and delivering to the people new areas for development in which to further the divine progress of the pioneer spirit.[60] Thus while championing the pioneer ideals of the West, Turner seems to attribute to Eastern and urban culture the role of furthering the frontier's plan of civilizing the coarse and "savage" aspects of western culture brought about by interaction with the environment.

Fromm's concerns over urban-centrism focus on the decline of religion as a result of the diminishing of man's direct relationship with nature in the modern world. In a critique of

[58] This is not to say that the relationship to the land was not one of exploitation during the frontier period, but rather that the focus on economics as a key aspect of this definition became more tangible through the development of modern markets during the Gilded Age.
[59] By "primitive" refers primarily to rugged self-sufficiency as well as decentralist and anti-urban proclivities. Turner, 287-9.
[60] Turner, 288.

the cultural development of America towards a future defined by markets, Fromm explores the modernizing effects on rural culture provided by the advance of technology.

> For most people, the fear of human fragility and a lack of substantial power against the material world made profound self-confidence a luxury only for kings…. The rise of industrialism in the West was accompanied by a decline of religion that cannot be seen as an accidental occurrence. And from then on the trend accelerates. As the average man becomes more enabled to live in comfortable houses… to escape most… childhood diseases… to store food for weeks, months or years ahead, to communicate rapidly through time and space… his perception of nature undergoes a startling alteration. No longer does Nature seem quite so red in tooth and claw…. His need for transcendence seems to fade away. For what, after all, is so dreadfully unpleasant about contemporary Western middle-class life that it needs to be transcended?[61]

Throughout his essay, Fromm criticizes the pursuit of religious experience in nature as a position of urban idealism. "If a need for transcendence does exist today…. It is a need based on satiety and not on deprivation, and it does not seek a haven in another world but rather a more beautiful version of this one."[62] Thus while Fromm may be concerned with the effects of the decline of spiritual strivings in modernity, his argument that technology and urbanization have led to a decline of religion supports Turner's view of the effects of nature on American culture as primarily a past influence tied to the frontier period. Regardless of whether one agrees with Fromm's argument that modern strivings to connect with transcendent qualities in nature are primarily the concern of the urban elite, it seems clear that the interpretation of religious sentiment as evoked by nature has become colored in modern description by the experience of a culture in which interaction with the natural world is not a major part of day-to-day experience.

At another point in his essay "Social Forces in American History," Turner makes the observation that the America resulting from the culmination of the frontier period is profoundly different from the America that entered this period and that the values used to justify the progress of America in relation to the frontier were based on this earlier America. As a result of the shift into an industrial and urban-centric society, Turner concludes, the pioneer idealization of competition came into conflict with those democratic elements of American social structure developed during the frontier.

> Two ideals were fundamental in traditional American thought, ideals that developed in the pioneer era. One was that of individual freedom to compete unrestrictedly for the resources of a continent – the squatter

[61] Fromm, 31-2.
[62] Fromm, 33.

> ideal. To the pioneer government was an evil. The other was the ideal of a democracy – "government of the people, by the people and for the people."…. But American democracy was based on an abundance of free lands; these were the very conditions that shaped its growth and its fundamental traits. Thus time has revealed that these two ideals of pioneer democracy had elements of mutual hostility and contained the seeds of its dissolution.[63]

Turner goes on to describe that much of Western sectionalism, the development of complex checks in political elections and the public call for conservation and federal control of the money power were all resulting factors of the creation of democratic safeguards to protect the freedom of local communities in the wake of the disappearing frontier. Turner's description of the turn of the 20th century acknowledges that the power of mechanization and urbanism are seemingly as much emphasized by a shift of popular culture away from the rural lifestyle in these decades as by the extension of urban and industrial forces into the lives of all Americans. Turner cites the migration to cities, the rise of mechanized agriculture and the federal involvement in Asia and elsewhere on the international scene as factors leading away from the experience of America as a rural utopia. Backed by the conceptualization of industrial development and a modern economy as creating new frontiers in which to exercise pioneer ideals, American culture began to exhibit an urban elitism which would not only seem to supplant the previous ideal of agrarian utopia but would begin a process of drowning out the cultural interests of current rural experience – those communities in many ways more akin to the pioneer lifestyle from which frontier values were initially developed.

The conflicting views of Thomas Jefferson and Henry C. Carey concerning the effects of urbanization on the American spirit reveal that the question of positioning American uniqueness in an agrarian social structure versus as simply inherent to American culture existed long before the time of Turner. Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787) has often been interpreted as presenting a cohesive rural ideology proscribing a decentralized democratic structure designed to protect both the private land owner and the traditions of local communities. By claiming the rural lifestyle to be a common aspect of the national character, Jefferson was instrumental in idealizing the frontier vision of agrarian utopia. In the following excerpt, Jefferson warns of the future effects of urbanization.

> Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God…. It [the land] is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth…. let our workshops remain in Europe…. The mobs of great cities add just so much to the

[63] Turner, 320.

> support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution.[64]

In a response to Jefferson, Henry C. Carey argued in 1851of the need for American cities in order to protect equal exchange among independent producers.

> It is here supposed that the desire for protection results from a selfish desire to tax others, but the persons exclusively devoted to manufactures of any kind are too few in number to affect the elections, and yet wherever mills or furnaces are established, the majority of the people become advocates of the doctrine of protection, and that majority mainly consists of agriculturalists, - farmers and planters. Why it is so, may be found in the fact that they experience the benefits resulting from making a market on the land for the products of the land, and desire their neighbors to do the same…. If protection be a "war upon labor and capital," it must tend to prevent the growth of wealth…. The farmer who exchanges his food with the man who produces iron by means of horses, wagons, canal-boats, merchants [etc.]… gives much food for little iron…. The chief part of the product is swallowed up by the men who stand between…. The growth of wealth is thus prevented, and inequality of political condition is maintained.[65]

Arguing against Jefferson's proposition that the U.S. should focus primarily on agricultural production, Carey asserts that only through the growth of American cities and local industry can the inequalities of long-distance commerce be averted. There seems no fear in Carey's description of the degradation of the American spirit by the rise of cities, and therefore one might assume that, like Turner, Carey seems to view the integral character of American culture to be impervious to urbanization.

Jefferson and Turner thus both seem to take the rural values of independent and spatially separated communities as holding common traits of a homogenized national identity. But while Jefferson views these values as dependent on a rural social structure, both Carey and Turner seem to view these values as internalized in American culture. The next section will discuss the conflict between the decentralized politics of communal rights and the abstract liberal definition of democracy supported by urbanization as an aspect of the shift into modernity.

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[64] Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," in *The American Intellectual Tradition: Volume I 1630-1865,* ed. David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 182-3.

[65] Henry C. Carey, "The Harmony of Interests," in *The American Intellectual Tradition: Volume I 1630-1865,* ed. David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 272-6.

Throughout his writings, Turner often refers to the fear of centralized control created by a rise in social complexity as a key trait brought about by frontier experience. As industrialization and urbanization progressed towards the modern age, this fear was transferred into the conflict between communal rights and the protection of individual rights by the federal government. Examining the fear of an increasingly complex social structure in the 1840s, Alexis de Tocqueville's discussion of local traditions can be compared to Jean Baudrillard's more recent observations of American democracy as an abstract idealism disconnected from its communal roots. This comparison reveals the effects of urbanization among other aspects of Fromm's conception of modernity as having separated American culture from the perception that America's national ideology is the conglomeration of traditional communal values.

It could be argued that the criticism of modernity's ideological culture (as represented here by Fromm's essay) is itself an offshoot of the fear of complexity born on the frontier. Turner's writings reveal how the fear of control from more complex power centers (first Europe, and later the eastern seaboard) during the development of the frontier was pitted against the dream of civilizing and developing the American continent. The suspicion first of elements of European culture by the settlers and later eastern culture by the pioneers of the West can be associated with the merging of the perception of the economic possibilities of new land (and the transcendent justification for America's future provided by that land) with the concept of renewal – the rejuvenation of a European spirit morally degenerated by urbanization and population pressures. Paradoxically, the fear of increasing political complexity as a dilution of the social traditions of the colonists seems to be in ideological opposition to the concept of American political structure as the product of the European Enlightenment – a democracy based on secularly justifiable clauses platonically deifying absolute concepts such as justice and political equality. Of the need for reevaluating American political ideals as America reached out into the Pacific at the close of the frontier, Turner writes

> …the United States found itself confronted… with the need of constitutional readjustment, arising from the relations of federal government and territorial acquisitions. It was obliged to reconsider questions of the rights of man and traditional American ideals of liberty and democracy, in view of the task of government of other races politically inexperienced and undeveloped.[66]

[66] Turner, 315.

On the level of federal politics, a democratic idealism more concerned with the rights of the individual than the small community has always existed in American political language. However, this form of political consciousness, which is now commonly referred to simply as liberalism, seems to have grown stronger from the dominance of the urban over the rural perspective in popular culture after the age of the frontier.

An early discussion of the fear that a rise in political complexity might diminish communal values can be found in the following quote from Tocqueville.

> …though townships are coeval with humanity, local freedom is a rare and fragile thing…. The difficulty of establishing a township's independence rather augments than diminishes with the increase of enlightenment of nations. A very civilized society finds it hard to tolerate attempts at freedom in a local community; it is disgusted by its numerous blunders and is apt to despair of success before the experiment is finished…. communal freedom is not, one may almost say, the fruit of human effort. It is seldom created, but rather springs up of its own accord. It grows, almost in secret, amid a semi-barbarous society.[67]

In Tocqueville's writing the concept of "local community," referring to the development of local traditions and social values seems synonymous with his use of the term "communal freedom" suggesting the connection of the social structure of isolated communities to the tradition of civic humanism. Tocqueville warns Americans that because communal mores are difficult to consciously establish in an organized manner, they should be cherished and protected from any diminishment through a rise in social complexity; a process he judges as having long ago occurred in Europe. "Among all the nations of continental Europe, one may say that there is not one that understands communal liberty."[68] Opposing this political value in American history is the Enlightenment-spurred language of liberalism which places the value of the equality of men above the rights of the community. Though this conflict is perhaps most apparent in American history during the relationship of the federal government with the Southern states after the civil war, the language of liberalism is at least as old as the value of local freedom (decentralization) stemming from the concept that America's political culture would be designed to fulfill the revelations of European political philosophy while remaining free from the distortions of its past mistakes.[69]

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[67] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Volume 1,* ed. J.P. Mayer and Max Lerner, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 73-4.
[68] Tocqueville, 74.
[69] While this statement is made in an absolutist way for the simplicity of discussion, it is not meant to suggest that cities are not also geographically bound to communal mores through the dominance of class, race or cultural groups. However, a comparison against smaller rural communities within the same general region will often reveal that urban centers, while culturally similar, do display values of variety and cosmopolitan aesthetics (here

In the section of his book *America* entitled "Utopia Achieved," Baudrillard argues that although the United States defines itself as having achieved those qualities that other societies strive for – freedom, justice, prosperity – the meaning of these utopian achievements disappears in the "zero-culture" of American society. [70] By "zero-culture" he means an (imitative and disconnected) ideological culture that represents a microcosm of European thought, mentally constructed in the new world as a satellite of European civilization. At the same time America is the location where these ideals have been supposedly realized through action, a concept supported in the 19th century by the Calvinist belief that wealth indicates strong moral character; the bread-basket of the frontier a sign of the moral worth of its pioneer culture.

> For the European, even today, America represents something akin to exile, a phantasy of emigration and, therefore, a form of interiorization of his or her own culture. At the same time, it corresponds to a violent extraversion and therefore to the zero degree of that same culture. No other country embodies to the same extent both this function of disincarnation and, at the same time, the functions of exacerbation and radicalization of the elements of our European cultures… It is by an act of force or *coup de theatre* – the geographical exile of the Founding Fathers of the seventeenth century adding itself to the voluntary exile of man within his own consciousness – that what in Europe had remained a critical and religious esotericism became transformed on the New Continent into a pragmatic exotericism.[71]

The abstraction of values to a point at which they loose their connection with traditions is another key shift of modernity which seems to parallel the relatively smooth transition supposed by Turner with which pioneer values are transported from rural communities to urban culture at the turn of the twentieth century. The replacement of communal identity for the individual with an identification linked to an abstract national consciousness is not merely a matter of politics but affects culture holistically, also involving other areas of a culture's ideological underpinnings, and thus coincides with Fromm's explanation of the decline of religion.

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meant as tied to the spirit of the age as represented by other cities, even around the globe, as opposed to geographically rooted common culture). Expressions of rootless nomadism such as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1955) can be partially attributed to the cultural dominance of urban over rural culture cited earlier which suggests an interesting difference in the structure of social mores between these two types of community. As a seeming microcosm of the development of American political culture in relation to the various countries from which its inhabitants originate, the migration to cities represents the substitution of externally apparent communal values based on ethnic or culturally specific commonality for a structure of values based on the need to easily accommodate variety through an adherence to more abstract principles as we see similarly in democratic liberalism. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1957).

[70] Baudrillard, 75-105.

[71] Baudrillard, 75.

Fromm writes in his essay: "It is not likely that the human race before our time, despite its life dominated by religion and churches and yearnings for transcendence, was a jot more spiritualized than it is today. For if the connection between the growth of industry and the decline of religion is a real one, the earlier spiritual longings appear as an escape from man's vulnerable battle with Nature."[72] Religion as a form of human interaction concerned with the connection of ideological concepts to physical life may be seen as having declined not merely as an effect of technology but also due to the rise of social and political complexity which provide other avenues for dealing with the escape from the hard natural existence cited by Fromm. Dealing primarily with the rise of comfort technologies, Fromm's point is essentially that, once human survival in the face of its surroundings (the environment) no longer produced barely endurable hardships for the average man, people seemed to turn away from religion. However, in addition to alleviating these hardships, the rise of a more complex society allowed by the advances of the modern age, also created a multitude of avenues for social engagement and community previously provided by religion. Thus it can be argued that the earlier dominance of religion as an institution may not have only fulfilled the role of inner solace but also acted as a vehicle of social interaction. That present-day rural communities often display stronger religious ties than urban communities seems to suggest the need for religion as an institution of social networking in addition to Fromm's argument of religion as escape from the hardships of nature as there is not much marked difference in the extent to which technology has made life easier for people in urban as opposed to rural conditions in the U.S.[73]

The book *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (1985) discusses the widespread shift of religion in the 20th century away from its role as a vehicle for communal values. A passage discussing the abstraction of modern Christian beliefs divorced from the context of the family serves as another example of the replacement of an attachment to communal values with the connection to a more abstract form of culture.

> [Though] One may continue to belong to the church of one's parents….
> The expectation is that… one will decide on one's own that that is the

[72] Fromm, 32.

[73] In addition, there are a variety of other social forces (at least in America, the development of welfare state politics in Europe can be seen to have had a similar effect) that might account for the perceived diminishing of the importance of religion at the turn of the 20th century (when the changes of industrialization are most in evidence). These include the influx of immigrants from other parts of Europe maintaining their own distinctive brands of Christianity and thus fragmenting previous protestant dominance, as well as increased sectionalism between the various geographical regions of the U.S. which can be seen to have the same effect. Furthermore, history is often defined according to the current self-definition of the society under study, and after industrialization, with a multitude of secular institutions and arenas for social interaction, Western societies are no longer defined primarily according to the particularities of religious affiliation.

> church to belong to. One cannot defend one's views by saying that they are simply the views of one's parents…. Today religion represents a frame of reference for the self as conspicuous in its absence as in its presence…. Liberalized versions of biblical morality tend to subordinate themes of divine authority and human duty to the intrinsic goodness of human nature…[74]

Thus the shift into modernity has weakened the relationship of religion to community, a process paralleling the decline of both traditional skills through mechanization cited by Berry and the connection of individual rights with communal values observed by Tocqueville. That choosing one's religion as a continuation of one's parents' values might be less acceptable in modern society than offering abstract (though personal) reasons for one's beliefs, can be seen as yet one more example in which communal mores have been subjugated to the judgement of a higher ideological order.

Fromm suggests in his essay that abstract principles of democracy, as a key element of America's national definition, often come into conflict with the need for collective action concerning environmental threats.

> The current terminology of doublespeak can be seen in the modish word "trade-offs," a concept which would admirably serve as the basis for present-day tragic drama. One would suppose from such talk that modern industrial corporations, with their fears of economic stagnation and their estimate of clean air as an unaffordable economic luxury, were Shelleyan Prometheuses, defending man's sublime aspirations in the face of a tyrannical and boorish Zeus…. The concept of "tradeoffs,"… [is that] one sacrifices the "luxury" of an uncontaminated environment in order to permit economic "progress"…[75]

While an abstract definition of individual rights has often protected Americans against local oppression, the national ideology of which Turner's pioneer values are a part, might be judged as falling short of the protective powers enabled by the collective values of communal tradition through the desire to provide equal representation. Thus, in effect, the "zero-culture" element of America cited by Baudrillard seems to have trumped Turner's attempts at a cohesive national ideology in American modernity by distancing the traditionalism of pioneer values from their communal roots.

In addition to separating pioneer values from rural culture, Turner's description of the conflict between decentralized political ideals and a centralized national character after the

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[74] Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart, Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1985), 62-3.
[75] Fromm, 36.

frontier forms another element of the shift in American society towards an abstract ideological culture in modernity. By examining both politics and religion in relation to social structure it is possible to see that the abstract idealism of modernity seems to have separated modern individuals from their local communities in a similar fashion to the separation by electronic media cited by McLuhan. As such, contradictions in the common experience of American modernity described by Fromm's essay act as a critical commentary on the social processes described by both Turner and McLuhan. Fromm's use of the Faustian theme will now be used to illustrate his criticism of modernity as put forth by these authors.

Fromm refers to the Faust myth continuously throughout his essay as a subtle means of ethically judging the shift into modernity. The depiction of the Faustian victim casting aside the real world to pursue his ambitions is used in Fromm's essay as a means of showing our own inability to face the environmental effects of our actions regarding the progress of technology. As mentioned earlier, Fromm explains that the mediation of the natural world by technology has created what he calls "the Myth of Voluntary Omnipotence" of which he writes: "It is the contemporary form of the Faust legend, a legend which in all its variants ends the same way. Nowhere is this modern version of the Faust myth so apparent as in the words of industrial corporations who attack the basic conception of environmental protection."[76] Fromm has thus argued that the Faust myth can be used today to understand the detrimental effects on the environment of an overly ideological conception of culture and society – a placement of mind over body that he considers the predominant current incarnation of the Faust myth. From Fromm's point of view, our culture seems to judge development mainly according to man's ability to overcome obstacles as opposed to the previously held belief that American social development is judged by external influences. In Fromm's description, Faust's devil tempts man through the ability of technology to defeat the hardships of nature. While Fromm admits to enjoying the comforts of modern technology, it is man's submission to blindness towards the natural world brought by this technology that he judges as Faustian sin. He makes this clear in the last line of the essay. "In the past, man's Faustian aspirations were seen against the background of his terrifying weakness in the face of Nature. Today, man's Faustian posturings take place against a background of arrogant, shocking, and suicidal disregard of his roots in the earth."[77]

For Fromm then, the current incarnation of the Faustian sin can be likened to the frontier impulse – the desire and belief in our ability to ceaselessly expand as a teleological

[76] Fromm, 35.
[77] Fromm, 39.

trait of culture disconnected from any physical space to expand into. This belief in our ability to overcome all obstacles without the oversight of our place in nature can be likened to William C. Fullbright's conception of the "arrogance of power." That the belief in expansion as a cultural trait can be justified above the level of a base impulse seems to echo Fullbright's description of the dangers of national idealism:

> The more I puzzle over the great wars of history, the more I am inclined to the view that the causes attributed to them – territory, markets, resources, the defence or perpetuation of great principles – were not the root causes at all but rather explanations or excuses for certain unfathomable drives of human nature. For lack of a clear or precise understanding of exactly what these motives are, I refer to them as the "arrogance of power"…[78]

The inability to address the environmental dangers of modern America is described as a tragedy by Fromm resulting from the incapacity to fully understand the many mental impulses that have been externalized upon the world around us."For all one's admiration of man's unconquerable mind and its Faustian aspirations, that mind would seem to be eminently conquerable, particularly by itself."[79]

Turner's description of the continuation of pioneer ideals through the redefinition of the influence of the frontier as a cultural trait can thus be seen as paralleling the concept of modernity in the twentieth century described by Fromm. Three key elements of this transition have been identified in this chapter: the restructuring of society by industry and technology, the redefining of American culture according to urban interests, and the replacement of an attachment of communal traditions with an attachment to an abstract conception of national ideals. Market forces, media technologies, and the rise of cities have all been cited as key instruments in the conception of culture as ideological and insulated from nature. While Fromm's description of this transition can be judged as pessimistic, and Turner's optimistic, both describe a modern world in which our relationship to nature has been muted as well as a description of human drives and idealism still very much connected to our past experience when nature exhibited a more obvious influence in shaping American society. The next chapter will deal with the retrospective analysis of frontier society and agrarian culture through its depiction in pastoral literature as coloured by the ideological positions of modernity.

[78] William J. Fullbright, "The Arrogance of Power," in the course compendium for ENG2570, University of Oslo (Oslo: Unipub AS, 2003), 21.
[79] Fromm, 38.

Chapter 2

Modern Literary Criticism of the Pastoral in Lawrence Buell's Essay "American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised"

In the analysis of cultural development, literature and socio-political history often act as cross-referencing tools – each used inter-textually by academicians to create an experiential understanding of history. The rural experience towards the end of the frontier period and its cultural reflection in pastoral literature are regularly understood in this manner. While this period is often described by historians as dominated by the changing effects of industrialization and urbanization (and their associated political conflicts), the nature-centered depictions of pastoral literature are often brought into analysis to create a composite frontier identity. Similarly, Turner's homogenization of frontier experience into a series of quintessentially American ideals and cultural traits as well as Leo Marx's discussion of the incorporation of machine technology into the national landscape in literature[80] are examples of the correlation between national culture as expressed through the artistic tradition and the elucidation of the national ideology in political discourse.

Lawrence Buell's essay "American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised," published in 1989 identifies a problem sometimes occurring with this process of historicism by arguing that modern interpretations of nineteenth century pastoral literature all too often oversimplify the rural experience represented by literary depictions as a result of inaccurately cross-referencing political and cultural (as represented in literature) history.[81] This chapter will analyze Buell's critique of the oversimplification of pastoral literature by contemporary positions of literary criticism as a means of exploring the historical relationship between rural experience and the many literary themes of the pastoral tradition. As Buell comments throughout his essay, the interpretation of pastoral literature from the 1800s in modern political terms often falls into the trap of not acknowledging the social experience of a less developed and less populated past. This problem of interpreting nineteenth century pastoral depictions from the position of modernity is in part associated with the redefinition of frontier influences as residing in culture rather than the land, as expressed by Turner's writings. Through an analysis of the modern interpretive positions criticized by Buell, I will explore the extent to which these

[80] *The Machine in the Garden*

[81] In many was this essay can be seen as a precursor to Buell's book *The Environmental Imagination*, published in 1995, outlining many of the seminal arguments put forth in this later work. As such, *The Environmental Imagination* will often be referred to as a means of clarifying Buell's concepts.

positions represent a loss of connection to (or understanding of) past aspects of rural experience as well as how these positions distort the politics of American pastoral writers (primarily the transcendentalists), the frontier mentality and the historical vision of a rural utopia. Turner's creation of a national ideology of pioneer ideals will be shown as producing an understanding of rural experience almost exclusively as the foundation of modern political traits – a process conspicuously paralleling contemporary poststructuralist perspectives of history, which argue that the interpretation of cultural history is inherently political. As deconstructing various political interpretations of pastoral literature forms a central theme throughout Buell's essay, many of his descriptions of the simplification of nature-oriented experience can be used to also analyze the simplification of our understanding of frontier culture occurring with modernity.

This chapter will begin with an examination of the Populist movement as representative of the political conflicts created by the loss of the frontier and the rise of industry. Using the Populist movement as a backdrop, multi-cultural, post-colonial and feminist criticisms interpreting pastoralism as regressive will be judged in relation to Buell's critique. I will then move on to explore covert political themes in pastoral literature (primarily in relation to the writings of Thoreau) which position nature as a location for individual escapism or which present nature as a mythic entity or doctrine capable of criticizing industrialization and social progress. Buell's essay proposes that the simplification of pastoral literature by contemporary criticism is largely the result of the lack of a sufficiently modern and urban perspective for analyzing the pastoral. This chapter will close by addressing the ambiguity of pastoral themes in modernity created by the paradox of a common loss of connection to rural experience conflicting with the national belief that transcendent qualities of the environment have been instrumental in producing American exceptionalism. Through an analysis of Buell's critique, modern interpretations of frontier era pastoral literature and the agrarian culture it represents will be shown as often failing to recognize that the politics of the pastoral form shifts in its support of official ideological culture throughout American history. Furthermore, as the pastoral form is an idealization, narrow political definitions of pastoral literature by contemporary criticism also fail to note that this literary form is not capable of fully expressing the multiple uses of natural spaces in frontier experience. Literary criticism will be shown in this chapter as having followed a path of continually devaluing the transcendent and mythic depictions of nature and thus having contributed to the repression of past forms of the nature/culture dichotomy in modernity.

One of the main arguments put forth by Buell's essay is that the pastoral form has always contained a combination of both radical and conformist elements and has acted throughout American history as an arena for confronting the perceived ills of society. Throughout his writings Buell often traces this conflict to Virgil's *Eclogues*, in which radical and conformist depictions of pastoralism are the "…two faces [of]… Tityrus and Meliboeus… the happy co-opted shepherd and the dispossessed, alienated shepherd of Virgil's first eclogue, where the convention of pastoral debate was first self-consciously ideologized."[82] Pastoral literature often seems to act in defense of agrarian politics expressing both radical and conservative sentiments as agrarianism's relationship to the dominant national culture shifts through history. As such, any use of the pastoral (including the criticism of its representation) can be seen not necessarily as beginning a new line of debate but rather as further development of the age-old discussion of the pastoral as a testing ground for social critique.

This conflict between pastoralism as representing conservative versus radical elements of rural culture is evident on the frontier at the end of the 19th century from which Turner draws his pioneer values. The values of this late frontier acted as a common ideological source for three distinct brands of American political culture: the urban market-based interests which Turner has been viewed as representing, the agricultural ideal of Jeffersonian democracy made strong by mechanized farming, and the seemingly[83] anti-industrialist criticism of market capitalism leveled by the Populist movement. Populism in particular can be used as a strong example of the conflict between conservative and radical ideologies during this period, as its platform of protecting the common man from big business pitted the abstract conception of individual rights as protected by federalism against the principle of competitive individualism dominant on the Jacksonian frontier. By exploring the relationship of frontier culture and politics with the traditional conflict between radical and conservative positions in pastoral representation I hope to merge contemporary criticisms viewing the pastoral as solely supporting hegemony or oppression into the traditional political debate between the radical and conformist sides of agrarianism and pastoral representation. In this way, criticisms which portray pastoral literature as supporting hegemonic culture will be seen to generally dismiss the changing politics of the frontier period.

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[82] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 52.

[83] I say 'seemingly' due to the discrepancy between historical scholars such as Leo Marx and Richard Hofstadter, who seem to disagree on the extent to which the Populist movement can be seen as a criticism of industrial market-oriented capitalism. Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 219. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 62.

The Populist movement contained both conservative and radical positions based on the need to preserve traditional agrarian values in the newly emerging conditions of the Gilded Age. For the Populists the end of the frontier represented the culmination of a past stage of development in which the rights of the individual had been protected by the competition for free lands. Populism looked back to the political conditions of pioneer life as more reflective of an ideal American culture informed by the transcendent influences of nature.

> The utopia of the Populists was in the past, not the future. According to the agrarian myth, the health of the state was proportionate to the degree to which it was dominated by the agricultural class, and this assumption pointed to the superiority of an earlier age. The Populists looked backward with longing to the lost agrarian Eden, to the republican America of the early years of the nineteenth century in which there were few millionaires and, as they saw it, no beggars, when the laborer had excellent prospects and the farmer had abundance, when statesmen still responded to the mood of the people and there was no such thing as the money power.[84]

However while the Populists were conservative in looking towards the past rural utopia of Jefferson as producing ideal political conditions, their politics can be viewed as radical in the political and economic means with which they hoped to deal with the problems of a new age. Turner writes of the Populist movement,

> With the passing of the frontier, Western social and political ideals took new form. Capital began to consolidate in even greater masses, and increasingly attempted to reduce to system and control the processes of industrial development…. The Western pioneers took alarm for their ideals of democracy as the outcome of the free struggle for the national resources became apparent. They espoused the cause of governmental activity. It was a new gospel, for the Western radical became convinced that he must sacrifice his ideal of individualism and free competition in order to maintain his ideal of democracy. Under this conviction the Populist revised the pioneer conception of government.[85]

Thus, though the Populist movement often appealed to pastoral imagery and frontier idealism their politics cannot be taken entirely as an indictment of the technological progress of the Gilded Age. The Populists charged the government with the task of regulating the new forces of mechanization to protect their interests from monopolies of industrial wealth, thus desiring popular control of the fruits of mechanization rather than a return to the pre-industrial age. [86]

[84] Hofstadter, 62.
[85] Turner, 305.
[86] The Populist position towards industrial conditions can be seen to differ from Emerson's vision of mechanization as furthering a rural utopia in that they feared the rule of a techno-aristocratic class.

Leo Marx further explores the ambiguous relationship between Populist politics and mechanization, writing that

> …the Jacksonian 'persuasion' embraces a typically nostalgic, or, as we say, ambivalent, look-both-ways kind of native progressivism. For all their misgivings, the Jacksonians are no more inclined than Webster to insist upon a root contradiction between industrial progress and the older, chaste image of a green Republic. On the whole they share the prevailing assumption that machine technology (and all that it represents) belongs, or can be made to belong, in the middle landscape.[87]

Thus, though the political arguments of the Populists like those of the Jacksonians were framed in relation to the techno-political realities of their time, the Populist position can be seen as distinct from the wider acceptance of the Jeffersonian ideal if not through a criticism of technological development then at least through the criticism of the monopolies created by expansion-oriented capitalism.

A key concern of rural America during the inception of modern industrial society was therefore the protection of the common frontiersman under newly emerging social conditions as represented by Populist interests. From the perspective of modern criticism of the pastoral literature of this period, however, the conflict between these historically radical and conservative positions of rural culture are often simplified or redrawn according to the politics of modern society. Populist ideology is, of course, not representative of all rural communities during the Gilded Age and similarly does not correspond with the views of all Pastoralist authors during this period. However, the conflict between conservative agrarian aesthetics and the need for progressive solutions as an element of Populism reveals the close of the frontier as a time when America struggled with the loss of rural culture through the changes of modernization.

Throughout his essay, Buell describes a mix of multi-cultural, post-colonial and feminist perspectives that criticize traditional portrayals of pastoral experience. At heart, Buell's skepticism towards all three approaches results from their interpretation of environmental influences on rural culture in pastoral literature as politically motivated. These interpretive positions critiqued by Buell illustrate the tendency among some branches of modern criticism to take pastoral literature from the frontier period out of its intended context in order to reveal its supposed support for social injustice. While the indictment of inequalities occurring with unrestrained capitalism that formed a major platform of the Populist agenda is one reason why these modern criticisms might be seen as over-simplifying

[87] Marx, 220.

frontier pastoralism, Buell also suggests that pastoral symbolism transcends these narrow political interpretations as a result of the wide range of different political uses of pastoral themes. Through an analysis of his critique, the politics of modern American society can be separated from those of the frontier period by understanding the universality of many pastoral themes including that of nostalgia for a less complex age, the pastoral form as a means of understanding the conflict between the individual and society, and the theme of nature as a location for individual escapism. That each of these positions of modern criticism can be linked to literature also employing the mythic symbolism of these pastoral themes indicates that the meaning of pastoralism transcends their accusations of hegemony.

Buell argues that the original meaning behind pastoral description is often threatened by feminist, multi-cultural and post-colonial critiques to which he contends that neither "…the feminist critique nor the critique of male pastoral imagination as social criticism is internally monolithic…. But the various revisionisms do add up to a diagnosis that the Pastoralism of the American authors traditionally regarded as major ought to be looked at as conservative and hegemonic, rather than as a form of dissent from an urbanizing social mainstream…"[88] Following from this, Buell argues that the absence of a simple definition of nature in pastoral representation means that such critiques essentially describe escapist nature narratives as a covert valorization of society. He demonstrates that pastoral themes have been recast in African American and Native American writing as a means of attacking hegemonic oppression. For instance, Buell discusses a story by Richard Wright revealing how the romantic passion for the pastoral is used to express white injustice in relation to the exclusion of blacks from the Jeffersonian ideal and the "new world" promise of America. In relation to Native American writing, Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* is discussed by Buell as an example of the connection of the indigene to a sort of 'primal power' accessible through the tangible link of Native American culture to geographically-specific places of nature.[89] Through their criticism of frontier culture as representing race, gender or class-specific hegemony, or as supportive of the destructive effects of expansion-oriented capitalism, these various critical positions see pastoral narratives primarily as supportive of the hegemonic institutions of American capitalism and racism.

Parallel to the criticism of an Anglo-centered vision of the pastoral, both the African American and Native American perspectives cited by Buell also present their own visions of a past pastoral paradise. Buell explores the use of pastoral imagery among these two groups in

[88] Buell, "American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised," 3.
[89] Buell, 13.

order to show that pastoral themes transcend new historicist criticisms. In *The Environmental Imagination*, Buell connects the pastoral to the negritude movement in which a nostalgia for African roots influenced African American writers of the early twentieth century. "Negritude can be thought of as a pastoral mode because it evokes a traditional, holistic, non-metropolitan, nature-attuned myth of Africanity in reaction to and critique of a more urbanized, 'artificial' European order – and evokes it, furthermore, from the standpoint of one who has experienced exile and wishes to return."[90] In the case of Native American versions of pastoralism, Buell suggests that conditions of the pre-colonial American continent are often evoked to create a conflict between the Jeffersonian dream and a "…communalistic land ethic alien to American assumptions about property rights."[91] Thus, though both of these positions criticize Anglo-oriented pastoralism as conservative and hegemonic, each maintains a use of pastoral imagery symbolically similar to that which they attack. As expressed in chapter one, the language of frontier culture (which includes the use of pastoral imagery) has been used throughout American history by a wide variety of different causes including both the urban capitalist interests of the Gilded Age and the predominantly rural voice of Populism. Because of this, criticisms of pastoral literature as representing hegemonic culture fail to recognize the universal form of the pastoral as a symbol of social conflict and its shifting use in pastoral literature as the relationship between city and countryside evolves in the frontier period.

Discussing the theme of escapism, Buell also examines pastoral literature in relation to gender conflict, beginning with a discussion of Leslie Fiedler's description of nature-quest narratives as male self-fulfillment in opposition to female-controlled society. From this dichotomy Fiedler concludes that romance can be seen as a major theme of the American literary tradition.[92] The tragic elements of this romance are brought to light with the recognition that, for both men and women the frontier represented the promise of reunion with a nostalgic past. Buell suggests that the dream of the frontier civilized may have signified for women a nostalgia for Europe. "Their Arcadian dream, in any case, was not of a natural paradise but of nature civilized; it remained nostalgic fantasy until that social transformation was well under way."[93] By comparing this female nostalgia to Turner's description of the

[90] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 64.
[91] Buell, "American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised," 13. This position has also been argued by George Perkins Marsh in his 1864 essay "The Destructiveness of Man" in which he seems to ally the Native American communalistic perception of land ownership with the Biblical symbol of humanity as occupying "the creation." George Perkins Marsh, "The Destructiveness of Man," in *So Glorious a Landscape, Nature and the Environment in American History and Culture*, ed. Chris J. Magoc Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2002), 136.
[92] Buell, 1-2.
[93] Buell, 2-3.

frontier as paralleling the development of human society from primitive conditions, the frontier can also be seen as producing a form of nostalgia for men, calling back to a more visceral age in which state control was less evident. In this binary description of the frontier as nostalgic fantasy lies the romance, for nostalgia—though not the past reality it might represent--can be seen as a common genderless theme aesthetically prominent in American culture.

Buell notes that the theme of escapism as an aspect of pastoralism's radical side has also been interpreted in too narrow a manner by contemporary criticism. Modern interpretations of pastoral literature as escapist are often the result of misrepresenting the radical side of the pastoral tradition's classic political duality in that escapism is commonly interpreted only in relation to the society left behind by the pioneer wishing to form a new society. "This duality was built into American pastoral thinking from the start, for it was conceived as a dream both hostile to the standing order of civilization (decadent Europe, later hypercivilizing America) yet at the same time a model for the civilization in the process of being built."[94] Turner's cultural internalization of frontier traits can be seen as contributing to this misrepresentation in that the radical decentralism of frontier culture has been incorporated into a homogenous national definition of the frontier's influence on the American character. Criticisms of pastoral descriptions in literature as escapist, first dealt with by Buell's essay in relation to D. H. Lawrence's judgment "…that nature-quest narratives represented an immature stage of cultural development,"[95] must thus also be judged in relation to the extent to which such criticisms preserve the status quo by trivializing narratives that might otherwise be seen as forming a critique of civilization. In other words, escape from the responsibilities of civilization (whether female-dominated or otherwise) might alternatively be seen as a question of what work in life is conducted out of feelings of social responsibility produced by the interdependence of urban society. More in line with the Rousseauian ideal of individual competition, communal conceptions on the frontier seem ideologically distinct from urban conceptions of civic duty. The use of nature-quest narratives as a means of critiquing society is intimately connected with the relationship of agrarianism to pastoral writing and the radical and conservative positions that both take throughout various periods of American history. According to Buell, one result of radicalism's role in American "civil religion" is that dissent is easily co-opted as a part of consensus in American culture.[96] This paradox of radicalism as

[94] Buell, 20.
[95] Buell, 1.
[96] Buell, 12.

traditional (and thus, in a way, conservative) can be seen as the product of history – America as founded by revolution and the frontier's role of having continuously moderated the buildup of social complexity. Buell claims that the view of the simple life and the pastoral aesthetic as radical or conservative (in this case meaning conformist) shifts throughout history in relation to the degree to which the "concrete qualities" of rural culture disagree with the establishment.[97] By concrete qualities, Buell refers to the technological, political, and economic conditions of rural and urban communities throughout history. Moving on to analyze Buell's discussion of the writings of Thoreau, the pastoral form of portraying a personal and spiritual experience of nature's influences will be seen as having been continuously reinterpreted politically by critics as radical or conservative in relation to the conflict between rural and urban culture as opposed to representing a political position external of official social dialogue. Descriptions in pastoral literature of nature as transcendent and mythical, as a place of escape for the individual, and as providing a position external of human affairs for the judgment of society are all regularly dismissed by much of contemporary criticism's political evaluation of pastoral writing.

Two themes of pastoral literature will now be discussed which present distinct uses of an aesthetic glorification of surrounding nature (which I will refer to as the nature aesthetic). The first is the use of escapist/anti-social themes as representing the conflict between the individual and society in which the nature aesthetic acts as a philosophical doctrine expressing discontent with society. The second is the theme of frontier communities as a formative stage of American culture in which the nature aesthetic acts as a guide for the construction and understanding of social structure.

The portrayal of nature as a location external of society from which to criticize social progress forms a key theme in many works by Thoreau. At one point in Buell's narrative while exploring a passage from Walden, he explains that Emerson was bothered by the ease with which Thoreau describes turning away from social conflict for immersion in nature.[98] Emerson's criticism thus suggests that the retreat into nature is directly contradictory to one's role as a citizen. Implicit in Emerson's criticism of turning away from society as an avoidance of civic responsibility lies the suggestion that Thoreau's true sin is a betrayal of the frontier's mandate to further the development of American society – the idea that growth is at least inevitable if not divinely destined. Buell notes that modern critics of Thoreau often echo

[97] Buell, 12.
[98] Buell, 7. Unlike Thoreau, Emerson viewed mechanized farming as a necessary step to realize the Jeffersonian dream. Marx, 230.

Emerson's criticism by labeling the theme of nature as a retreat from society as a position viewing "nature as elite-androcentric-preserve" meaning that such depictions reveal the relationship of an elite class towards nature and not the experience of the common man.[99] This criticism of nature as a retreat from society for the individual has led to interpretations of Thoreau's description of the individual's interaction with nature as tragic, antisocial, or incommensurate with responsible civil life.[100]

In response to this line of criticism, Buell uses Mary Austin's *The Land of Little Rain*[101] to show that the positioning of nature against societal progress can often represent a communal attitude and thus transcend individual escapism. Writing of the cultural traditions and way of life of desert communities in Owens Valley, California, Austin portrays opposition to the "civilizing" effects of eastern American society on nature as integrated into social structure.[102] Using the carefully descriptive style common to natural science and cultural anthropology, Austin identifies these communities as allied with a transcendent doctrine of nature that seems to stand opposed to the larger body of society. Buell writes of Austin's narrative that "…the persona speaks from the position of being *in* the wilderness, and in personal confrontation of the complacencies of settlement culture, alienated from these both in space and in soul."[103] Thus Buell concludes that Austin's work can be viewed as a counterpart to Thoreau's writing and has acted as a vehicle to further "…the claims of individual self-realization against social constraint…"[104] In Austin's description of California desert culture, however, this is not presented primarily as the conflict between the individual and society but rather as a narrative of a collection of individuals whose primary defining activities are the interaction with the natural world as opposed to with each other. Politically, Austin's portrayal of California and Arizona desert culture reveals Rousseau's role as a key forefather to American political philosophy by describing collective involvement with nature

[99] Buell, 8. As related in the first chapter, this position is criticized similarly by Harold Fromm who considers the modern quest for the spiritual in nature to be a product of urban-centrism.
[100] A position that might be partially responsible in contemporary culture for Ron Arnold's metaphor of environmental ideology as a "wild wolf" in the garden of the pastoral tradition, representing the fear that many contemporary environmental positions are incommensurate with the progress of society. Arnold, 279.
[101] Mary Austin, *The Land of Little Rain* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1974)
[102] Buell, 18.
[103] Buell, 18.
[104] Buell, 19. One example of Austin's style of taking the side of nature against society occurs in *The Land of Little Rain* in her discussion of the effects of drought on the desert. In describing the changes drought brings to this arid environment Austin seems to valorize the means by which scavengers thrive at the expense of cattle and other flora and fauna crucial to the life of the ranch, while conversely the professions often romanticized in her writing are those not seeking to cultivate (alter the landscape of) the land, such as nomadic desert miners. Austin, 31-40.

as never exceeding the experience of the individually distinct frontiersman.[105] This emphasis on individualism in isolated frontier communities reflects the frontier value of competition for resources that Turner associates with Jackson and describes as sacrificed by the Populist movement.

> Vehement and tenacious as the democracy was, strenuously as each man contended with his neighbor for the spoils of the new country that opened before them…. It was a frontier free from the influence of European ideas and institutions. The men of the "Western World" turned their backs upon the Atlantic Ocean, and with a grim energy and self-reliance began to build up a society free from the dominance of ancient forms…. The unchecked development of the individual was the significant product of this frontier democracy.[106]

Competitive individualism as a cultural trait, with its implication of widespread anti-social (or at least isolationist) sentiment, is not always acknowledged in the analysis of pastoral narratives labeled as escapist or radical. As a result of this, the political side of these descriptions is often portrayed as an expression of alienation – a conflict between political ideals contained within a pre-existing social dialogue assuming homogenous American culture. The role of nature as a location for the individual to criticize social progress is diminished in the depiction of pastoral narratives as alienation, escapism or aesthetic glorification as a result of the denial that they might present a radical political position in which the frontier values of decentralism and competition have acted as the source for social responsibility. Having discussed the connection of agrarianism to pastoral literature as reflecting frontier-bound political concerns, Buell's treatment of Thoreau will now be discussed in relation to the de-politicization of nature writing through criticisms that label transcendentalist themes as solely concerned with spiritual quest as opposed to social criticism.

The denial of nature's influence as a political position in and of itself is highlighted by the following recognition by Buell that Thoreau's popularity as a nature writer was initially separate from his role as a political radical. "Thoreau's growing appeal to American readers was based much more on the domesticated image of him as literary naturalist than the image of him as an economic/political radical."[107] Only later with John Macy, claims Buell, was

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[105] By this I mean that it seems to support Rousseau's minimalist version of social contract theory whereby population pressures force property ownership and complex society on an idyllic collection of isolated individuals. Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), 698.
[106] Turner, 253-4.
[107] Buell, 8-9.

antiestablishmentarianism considered a major theme by which American writers were valued. The theme of de-politicizing nature's role is further developed by Buell through his exploration of the popularization of Thoreau's nature writing at the expense of political works such as "Resistance to Civil Government," which Buell explains by citing D. H. Lawrence's adage that "…absolutely the safest thing to get your emotional reactions over is NATURE."[108] This statement implies that as seemingly safe, pastoral descriptions often function as an outlet for political sentiment limited by social consensus to expression only in emotional symbolic terms.[109]

In relation to the theme of alienation, Buell takes much the same position as David Reisman in *The Lonely Crowd*, that alienation (at least in relation to pastoral description) is commonly seen as a process contained within culture.[110] As mentioned earlier, using Austin's writing as an example of cultural description in which the individual's experience and societal role are not entirely defined by social dialogue, Buell describes that conversely in the writings of Thoreau "…the persona remains always in dialogue with – and always to that extent a member of – the community whose norms he rejects."[111] This positioning of the nature-located radical within society in pastoral literature creates a view in modern culture of descriptions of nature's transcendent influences as produced by deification of the environment or as the product of a socially created aesthetic symbolism of nature. Literary criticism (in this case including Buell's interpretation of Thoreau) thus often views pastoral descriptions emphasizing nature as a location for escape only for their literary qualities while political messages, when present, are bound by their meaning within culture:

> …pastoral becomes a means of expressing alienation, yet also, on another level, a means by which alienation is mediated. It invites normalization to the extent that it permits the reader to experience it as an archetypal story of lost innocence or green world immersion. It resists co-optation and becomes an oppositional act to the extent that it pursues an indictment of social pathology and oppression.[112]

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[108] Buell, 9.

[109] Thus we can see the ambiguity between critical evaluations of Thoreau's position as political versus mystical with which the image of a lilly is interpreted in a passage from Thoreau cited by Buell. "Whereas on the level of the action, the passage seems to support the notion of nature as a refuge from complexity, on the rhetorical level the flower is arguably not so much a mystification as a self-conscious device for exposing public consensus as repressive and arbitrary." 10.

[110] "…even in a society depending on tradition-direction there still remain strivings which are not completely socialized…. Cultures depending upon tradition-direction usually manage to institutionalize a degree of rebellion not only for their deviants but for everybody." David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1961), 108-9.

[111] Buell, 18.

[112] Buell, 23.

Buell has argued that mythical and political interpretations of the pastoral are but two of many ways to read the writings of Thoreau. While this serves Buell's overall argument that pastoral narratives are oversimplified by modern criticism, this statement acts to separate myth from rebellion, reorienting Thoreau's conception of the nature aesthetic towards eco-centrism's non-mythic treatment of nature.[113] Two literary passages cited in Buell's essay do, however, reveal a connection in pastoral literature between nature as mythic force and nature as providing the setting for rebellious doctrine that seems more in line with 19th century pastoral writers as opposed to the position of eco-centrism.

Firstly, Buell analyzes Thoreau's attack against the concept of valuing nature only for its developmental use-value in his descriptions of a rustic farm that he nearly chose as the location for *Walden*. In Buell's description of this passage the concept of nostalgia for a simpler (meaning less complex and emphasized over a harder contemporary) time is used to assault progressivism. "I chose this farm, the passage says, deliberately for the wrong reasons…. My notion of use value is the opposite of yours, which is based on exchange – so there. Pastoral hedonism becomes and indictment of the deadening pragmatism of agrarian economy."[114] Buell's use of the word pragmatism here can be taken as criticizing the idea of the wilderness as space valued only for its potential development rather than as the location of nature's divine plan for American culture in that he calls into question the meaning of this plan in relation to the conflict between progressivism and a passive conception of individual fulfillment under agrarian conditions.

Secondly Buell explores the covert rebellion inherent in portrayals of nature's innocence as a 19th century pastoral theme. Buell explains that Thoreau, Mark Twain and Susan Cooper all often construct nature from an empathetic position, describing as tragic the "…vulnerability of diminutive creatures…" against the aggressive ignorance of human society.[115] Developing on Buell's discussion, I would add that as these authors often use a child's voice to convey nature's innocence, this theme on one level de-politicizes its own description in citing the child's perspective as not fully formed, while on another level the use of the child's voice functions as a political vehicle for the dictates of nature too spiritually-oriented (or too separated from the mandates of social development) to be rationalized in the mature language of adult political discourse.

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[113] Though depictions of nature as mythic do not function as a valid criticism of society for Buell, his position of eco-centrism (which separates nature from all human interpretation) provides nature with an alternate political voice.
[114] Buell, 12.
[115] Buell, 15-7.

In both Thoreau's description of the rustic farm and the pastoral theme of innocence as expressed through the child's voice, the radical doctrine of a transcendent design for culture residing in the environment acts as a means of criticizing societal progress. However as the closed system of social definition in modernity tends to prevent positions outside of social discourse (such as the denial of nature's innocence as a political position as well as the theoretical opposition to eco-centrism) the connection of deified nature to rebellion in literary criticism can be judged as failing to recognize more than a mere symbolism of the transcendent dictates of nature suggested by these narratives. In the interpretation of radical themes in pastoral literature as representing a homogenous American identity produced by the frontier, the environment is relegated to serving as a symbol for political voices only so long as those voices do not seek a relationship with the environment in deference to society.[116]

While this dismissal of the politics of deified nature as oppositional to social progress held through the first half of the twentieth century,[117] Buell writes that Thoreau and other nature writers of the 19th century portraying this theme were hailed as champions of the nature aesthetic by Marx and other literary critics in the 1950s and 60s. "Those writers judged to have written most powerfully and searchingly about the pastoral experience assumed, indeed, the status of social prophets: critics of corruption in the name of a purer American vision of a society founded on the order of nature."[118] However, by the 1960s, the idea of a loss of our connection to nature produced through modernity had also provided fertile ground for criticisms of elitism whereby the spiritual experience of nature in pastoral description would be viewed more as an empathic and aesthetic pursuit in contrast to its earlier mode as a means of interpreting the dictates for social progress of a transcendent design occupying the space of nature. Thus the idealistic position of deifying the spiritual experience of man's interaction with the environment can be seen as a de-politicized form of the more practical and political position of Arcadianism, defined by Donald Worster as advocating "…a simple, humble life for man with the aim of restoring him to a peaceful coexistence with other organisms."[119]

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[116] I would argue that the positioning of nature's innocence as a political voice external of social dialogue would likely be regarded by modern criticism as urban elitist in much the same way as the quest for spiritual connection in nature is often considered by contemporary critics.

[117] Buell writes that for the first half of the twentieth century "…American studies scholarship had been studying in a sociohistorical rather than psychohistorical fashion the impact of Jeffersonianism upon the American literary imagination." Thus it is partly through the denial of the psychohistorical impact of agrarian ideology that the alliance of the individual frontiersman with nature for the purpose of criticizing progress has been repressed by literary criticism. 2.

[118] Buell, 2.

[119] Donald Worster *Nature's Economy, A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2.

The modern criticism of elitism leveled against Thoreau and other pastoral writers can be seen as a continuation of Melville's nineteenth century criticism of Thoreau as described in Marx's *The Machine in the Garden*. Marx develops a discussion of Melville's theoretical rejection of the 'all feeling' (a term from Goethe) celebrated as the true connection of man with the natural world by Melville's transcendentalist predecessors.

> The extravagant claims of that doctrine, Melville is saying, stem from a tendency to confuse a transitory state of mind – the 'all' feeling – with the universal condition of things. He does not deny the significance of that religious emotion as a gauge of man's inner needs, what he does attack is the mistake of projecting it upon the universe. The letter is a treatise in small against excessive trust in what Freud calls the 'oceanic feeling.'[120]

What can be drawn from this passage is a recognition on Melville's part that this aspect of transcendentalist idealism signifies a sharp rejection of man's ability to fulfill himself in a society which increasingly sees its achievements defined through progressive empiricism. What begins, in Leo Marx's account with Carlyle and Hawthorne as a fear of the unbalancing of the Aristotelian soul[121]--"The Unpardonable Sin is the great sin of the Enlightenment – the idea of knowledge as an end in itself"[122] – is transformed in the conflict between the all-feeling and atropos (the unstoppable dynamo of technological and industrial development), into a bitter and seemingly insurmountable war between man's mental and animal souls. As the industrialization of American society spread, Emerson's faith that our societal ethics will mature in tempo with technological progress is increasingly seen as false. The rejection of understanding nature in mythic terms occurring with the shift in literary criticism towards eco-centrism, which I will discuss shortly, might be seen as a modern extension of Melville's interpretation of the all-feeling as an impractical and unsustainable form of interaction with nature. Though Melville critiques the "all-feeling," his writing alternatively reveals a mythic treatment of nature's antagonistic side which stands in opposition to the treatment of nature by eco-criticism. What seems lost in this transition is the acknowledgement that interaction with nature on the frontier initially evoked mythic interpretations of the environment. The recasting of these mythic interpretations as solely the product of urban elitism only emphasizes the disconnection from nature occurring with modernity and denies the role

[120] Marx, 280-281.
[121] By the "Aristotelian soul," I refer to Aristotle's concept of the balanced tripartite of mind, heart and body, as opposed to his conception of the soul as related to *telos*.
[122] Marx, 273.

played by past versions of the nature-culture dichotomy in contemporary interpretations of pastoral literature.

Before concluding this chapter I would like to discuss the relationship of contemporary American culture with nature discussed in Buell's essay. The concept of "heroic nature" as expressing a political sentimentalism in deference to the loss of rural experience in modernity can be seen as paralleling the trend of literary criticism away from the deification of nature in exchange for the aesthetic valuation of "experiential" accounts of nature in literature. But the deification of nature persists as an aspect of American exceptionalism creating a cultural conflict when combined with the loss of a connection to nature that makes a modern understanding of the pastoral difficult to define. The ambiguity of this conflict can be separated into three categories suggested by Buell's essay: a tragic view portraying pastoralism as incommensurate with progress, the problem of "experiential" and environmentally-protective depictions of nature in replacing the view of nature-born transcendent influences on culture in pre-twentieth century pastoralism, and the seeming acceptance of the conflict between agrarian culture and industrial capitalism as equally formative elements in the creation of modern American society.

In their book *American Space/American Place* Agnew and Smith describe a perception of sublime places in the American environment that they refer to as "heroic nature." Sites of heroic nature evoke wonder from Americans not so much as a result of direct interaction with their natural characteristics, but rather from the sentimentality for the frontier embedded in America's cultural memory.

> This nature that is understood as the source and sustaining force of American political ideas is a poetic form, idea, image, or device that has often been used to understand the mysteries of American exceptionalism…. This is to say that it is a metaphor that conveys analogically a political doctrine that would be otherwise mysterious, either because it is nowhere clearly articulated or because its clear articulation is too long, difficult, and tedious for an ordinary person to comprehend.[123]

The concept of heroic nature is useful for describing what has become of our view of the transcendent influences of nature in modern urban-centric society. Buell's contention that 'literal rurality' (actual rural experience) has been marginalized in exchange for a more urban conception of the pastoral seems to position the continuing deification of nature tied to the concept of heroic nature as representing a cosmopolitan viewpoint.[124] While Buell does not deny the place of rural American culture in the national ideology celebrating "heroic"

[123] Agnew and Smith, 32.
[124] Buell, 4-5.

(politically sentimentalized) depictions of nature, he does suggest that the concept of a loss of our connection with nature ignores many aspects of rural life. The labeling of specific natural formations such as Niagra Falls and the Grand Canyon as heroic nature creates a pre-defined experience for tourists wishing to reconnect with the transcendent influences believed to have shaped the American character, and also acts to preserve the idea that the frontier is immortal.[125]

Arguing for a recognition of nature beyond its mythic characteristics in literature, Buell discusses the shift in literary criticism towards eco-centrism from the use of nature as a "symbolic negative" (with which society is judged) to the valuation of nature descriptions in relation to their experiential and descriptive aspects. Buell partially attributes this shift to the belief among critics that descriptions of the transcendent qualities in nature have been overused in literature to the point of commonplace obviousness.[126] Buell explains that contemporary literary critics value pastoral descriptions more for their experiential and representational qualities than in relation to the author's ability to access nature's myths.[127] Using Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* as an example, Buell describes this new aesthetic of pastoral literature: "Leopold's tactic is first to lull the reader into an idyllic mood, then broach the more controversial critique and solution needed to preserve the experience of beauty and intimacy with nature that has previously been dramatized."[128] Discussing the combination of art with activism in Leopold's writing, Buell reveals how the non-mythic description of natural beauty can be used as a form of political action to make the reader sympathetic to the geographically-bound places described. In praising Leopold's methods at the expense of Thoreau's, the deification of nature is judged as dramatizing the individual's experience of nature and, as such, threatening the true *experiential* qualities of the experience itself. In this way Buell seems to dismiss the spiritual feelings evoked through interaction with nature as not accurately representing the experience of nature provided by the senses, rather than cherishing the evocation of these feelings as the producer of value and meaning.[129] In Buell's description of Leopold's writing, transcendent influences from the environment are dismissed as dramatizing natural description and consequently distorting our view of the

[125] Furthermore, these places provide an experience of nature connecting modern Americans to their pioneer roots paralleling Turner's rewriting of the influence of the frontier as an inbuilt cultural trait in that real interaction with nature is not necessary for the evocation of these sentiments.
[126] Buell, 5.
[127] Buell, 5.
[128] Buell, 11.
[129] Mary Austin, is used in a similar manner to Leopold by Buell when making this argument as she writes from a local perspective seemingly contained within nature rather than viewing nature as an external mythic influence on culture. Buell, 18.

actual places described. This modern critical approach seems to associate natural depictions by Thoreau to the emotions generated by places of heroic nature in Agnew and Smith, lifting them from their place-bound context to the level of ideology. With Leopold, Buell explains, faithfully pursuing natural description has become the use-value of nature writing in itself. It can be argued, however, that this leaves scientifically accurate descriptions of specific natural places susceptible to judgments of political agenda in the same manner that the criticisms of pastoral narratives as designed to express nature as mythic, politically subversive, or as a location for escape are judged. In the end, Buell argues that the overall meaning of the pastoral tradition cannot be pinned down to one perspective. "…the ideological valence of pastoral writing cannot be determined without putting the text in a contextual frame… ostensibly similar terms bear quite different iconic significances depending on context."[130]

For Buell, one of the main sources of the oversimplification of the pastoral by modern criticism is that in modernity "…we have not yet arrived at a sufficiently intricate and cosmopolitan model for understanding American pastoral."[131] In order to solve this problem, Buell argues for a greater degree of comparison between American pastoralism and that of other colonial nations. Maintaining a degree of American exceptionalism in this comparison however, Buell discusses the importance of the deification of nature's influence on the historical development of American society. He argues that the U.S. was the first and one of the only places where the pastoral ideal has been translated to some extent into the political design of the country.[132] The effect of this continued belief in divine influences from nature as a foundation of American exceptionalism (and the continuing importance of Jefferson's utopian dream) is that Buell's essay cannot help but suggest a variety of troubling ambiguities resulting from the disconnection from nature as an aspect of modernity. Thus a problematic modern conception of the pastoral is suggested by Buell's essay in three ways.

Firstly, Buell asserts that Marx's view of the pastoral is inherently tragic--expressing the frontier life as past and progress as painfully inevitable: "Indeed, the effect of his analysis is to stress above all the irony of the gap between pastoral as ideological construct and pastoral as social program."[133] Marx's view of the transformation of the pastoral by modernity can be seen as structurally similar to the argument made by Turner in valorizing the developmental potential of mental frontiers in the wake of the vanishing empty lands, but as representing an ethical viewpoint whereby the loss of the pastoral experience of the frontier

[130] Buell, 19.
[131] Buell, 1.
[132] Buell, 21.
[133] Buell, 4.

is seen as irrevocably tragic as opposed to easily transformed into a more abstract process of expansion. However it is not only the creation of a culture founded on a connection to nature that Marx describes in the terms of tragic nostalgia, but more importantly the belief that man can create a society based on such influence. By contrast we are possessed today of a feeling that there is an unbreachable chasm between technological society and the agrarian ideal—a perception that surfaces in a variety of conflicts including the ever more pressing concern over environmental problems. Ron Arnold, for example, has criticized the ethical underpinnings of contemporary environmental activism arguing that many environmentalists seem to argue from a position of anti-progressive primitivism. In contrast, Arnold claims that the pastoral ideal as envisioned by Marx occupied a middle landscape "…between the opposing forces of civilization and nature."[134] Arnold argues that, since Marx, environmental activism seems to increasingly assume positions unpalatable to large political constituencies within the U.S.

> Since 1964, the rise of environmentalist ideology has pushed the pastoral ideal increasingly toward nature, striving to redefine the meaning of America in fully primitivist terms of the wild. Eco-ideologists have thrust their metaphoric raging Wolf into every rank and row of our civilized Garden to root out both the domesticated and the domesticators.[135]

A second modern manifestation of this ambiguity occurs with Buell's discussion of Aldo Leopold as foreshadowing the merging of art and activism that would later prove useful for the environmental awareness championed by groups such as the Sierra Club: "The aim is to create a symbiosis of art and polemic, such that environmental representation and lyricism exist for their own sake, yet also, in addition, ex post facto, as a means to make the reader more receptive to environmental advocacy."[136] This tactic acts to strengthen the reader's awareness of nature as a physical other, albeit, in a regionally localized manner. The character of a given area of nature is brought forth through scientific description suggesting that direct experience or empirical knowledge of the environment humanizes that environment. The problem with this approach becomes apparent when related to Alison Byerly's argument that nature is most commonly defined by environmental groups in relation to its use value for mankind. Byerly critically compares organizations such as the Sierra Club with more pro-active groups such as Greenpeace, explaining that there is a danger that the

[134] Arnold, 279.
[135] Arnold, 279.
[136] Buell, 11.

preservation of ecosystems for scientific purposes is not included in a mission statement of preserving wild spaces for their aesthetic appeal, and vice versa.[137] Again we can see definitions of the environment broken down into use-specific spaces as opposed to as representing an external space that might encompass all definitions of use value, and in doing so, transcend such notions. Neither the experiential descriptions of modern pastoral literature nor the scientific descriptions of environmental activism provide a sufficiently holistic viewpoint of nature to act as a substitute for the pastoral culture valuing nature for its transcendent influences that existed before the twentieth century.

The modern confusion surrounding pastoralism is further elaborated by Buell's discussion of Wendell Berry's assertion that the Jeffersonian ideal has switched from a conservative to a radical political position. Arguing that the harmonious agrarian democracy envisioned by Jefferson can be used today as a weapon against "agribusiness," Berry reveals the extent to which this ideal has been altered by the move of mechanization towards urban-based industry.[138] The blending of the Jeffersonian ideal, often representing a land aristocracy, with the criticisms of unbridled capitalism forming a cornerstone of the Populist movement further confuses modern interpretations of the pastoral. In his essay "The Agricultural Crisis as a Crisis of Culture," Berry describes how the belief in progress as a route to efficiency made palatable by the view of progress as limitless, has led to a devaluation of the process of passing tradition from generation to generation. The result Berry suggests is an increasingly fragmented culture in which the long-standing ideologies of free-market capitalism and Jeffersonian agrarianism have created tragically accepted conflicts. The effect of this conflict, Berry argues, is that overproduction has led to a decline of the agrarian lifestyle through the rise of factory farming. "…any abundance, in any amount, is illusory if it does not safeguard its producers, and in American agriculture it is now virtually the accepted rule that abundance will destroy its producers."[139] In the national ideology dominating modern American society, capitalism and agrarianism are both respected as long-standing traditions, and thus their conflict in modernity is accepted – further complicating the relationship to nature within which contemporary America searches for definitions of the pastoral.

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[137] Alison Byerly, "The Uses of Landscape: The Picturesque Aesthetic and the National Park System," in *The Ecocriticism Reader, Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 63.
[138] Buell, 13.
[139] Berry, 28.

Through Buell's essay, we can see the reinterpretation of pastoral literature from the position of modernity as a continuous trend of devaluing those same transcendent influences of nature that had always seemed to define American exceptionalism. Buell's discussion reveals how pastoral themes have always acted as an arena for political debate concerning the progress of American society. Thus, the rhetoric of feminist, multicultural and postcolonial criticisms (which attempt to paint pastoralism as regressive) parallel that of the Populist yeoman and the middle-class Jeffersonian in the deliberate use of the romance of the pastoral and an appeal to the transcendent qualities this romance represents. Using the writings of Thoreau as an example, the positions of literary criticism which treat pastoral description as solely escapist, a means of expressing social alienation or as a non-political deification nature can all be seen as severing the role of nature's influence as a political criticism of social progress. However, as we have seen, references to these transcendent qualities as a political counterpoint to the developments of society cannot always be explained in the terms of political conflict as solely reflecting rival political constituencies within society – an interpretation which can be linked to the understanding of historical radicalism and decentralism as part of the homogenous national character produced by the frontier. The simplification of the pastoral as a product of modernity can be related to the conflict between a feeling of disconnection from nature in modernity and the continued glorification of nature's influence on American culture as an aspect of American exceptionalism in the national ideology as laid out by Turner. The next chapter will use the theme of threatening depictions of nature during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a means of describing one area in which older forms of the nature-culture relationship have survived in modernity.

Chapter 3

The Sublimation of Nature's Influence on Culture in Paul Neubauer's "American Landscapes of Terror: From the First Captivity Tales to Twentieth-Century Horror Stories"

The positions of Fromm, Buell and Neubauer all inherently question the simplification of the frontier's influence on American culture occurring with Turner's description of the continuation of pioneer ideals as a cultural trait. While Fromm analyzes technology's veiling effects on our relationship with nature, Buell discusses the simplification of past agrarian experience by modernity's failure to understand the multi-faceted experience portrayed in pastoral literature. Using literary descriptions of threatening wilderness as representational of the evolution of the nature/culture relationship in American history, Neubauer explores the dismissal of the frontier's influence as a physical force by revealing dangerous and mythic perceptions of nature in literature as sublimated in American culture through the shift into modernity. Neubauer writes "…on the other side of America's Manifest Destiny and of a paradigmatic American optimism lies their Manichean opposite, suppressed and ignored, hidden and exorcized." [140] As direct interaction with the environment diminished through the shift into modernity, the natural harshness of the frontier (which had acted as a counterpoint to Manifest Destiny) lost its role as inspiring confidence and adaptability in the American spirit. Neubauer argues that the result of this is that American literature from the late nineteenth century has increasingly portrayed nature's antagonistic side as devoid of divine purpose. Analyzing a series of six literary tableaus from early colonization through the 1930s, Neubauer's essay contributes to Fromm's analysis by revealing additional facets in the changing relationship of mind to nature, as well as Buell's analysis, by addressing non-political influences of nature on culture in literary description. Through the evolution of literary "landscapes of terror," Neubauer's essay describes essential shifts in both the deification of anthropomorphized visions of nature and the positioning of man's society and psyche in relation to these visions.

Neubauer's essay portrays a process through which scenes of antagonistic nature in American literature evolve alongside American development. The relationship of culture to

[140] Neubauer, 347. The concept of Manifest Destiny seems to go hand in hand during the frontier period with the incredible optimism of the frontiersman to overcome all obstacles which Turner discusses as a driving force of American development.

nature's threats takes three distinctive forms along this evolution: nature as non-mythic resistance to development, nature as a mythic antagonist and/or transcendent means of understanding the human psyche, and mythic nature as sublimated in urban or cultivated spaces. This chapter will analyze each of these forms in relation to modern examples in fiction in order to better understand the relationship of modernity to past versions of the nature/culture dichotomy in American history. The first form of nature-culture relationship explored by Neubauer describes nature as an external non-mythic impediment to progress, an antagonistic counterpoint to Turner's description of the frontiersman's adaptability in the face of harsh environments. On the frontier, many natural regions defied preconceived visions for their development, stimulating literary descriptions of the borderlands archetype: dangerous landscapes defying cultivation lying beyond the boundaries of civilization. A second key form of the interaction between nature and culture discussed by Neubauer is the theme in gothic literature of understanding savage human drives in relation to their mythic representation by wilderness. As contemporary fiction often portrays urban and cultivated spaces as a form of wilderness (psychologically speaking) this gothic theme can be seen as a continuing criticism of progress in American culture. Lastly, through the separation from nature occurring with the rise of modernity, mythic nature is relegated to the realm of the subconscious creating a new type of terror epitomized, according to Neubauer, by H. P. Lovecraft's "Cthulhu myth." Artistic themes following the form of the Cthulhu myth separate the modern individual from savage elements in his subconscious, previously accessible through depictions of gothic wilderness, creating an experience of the past and wilderness (wilderness representing both nature and the subconscious) as haunting modern American culture. Through the development of these three forms of the nature/culture dichotomy in literature, the sublimation of cultural interaction with nature's influences can be seen as a key facet of the experience of modernity.

Neubauer begins by examining the theme of harsh natural environments as a non-mythic impediment to the process of nation-building in early American colonial literature; a nature-culture interaction revealing the conflict between harsh natural spaces and the ideal of American adaptability.[141] His essay discusses this non-mythic interpretation of dangerous wilderness in relation to the first two groupings of literary excerpts in his essay – Mary

[141] Turner has argued that the pioneer experience in colonizing harsh natural spaces has had a strong influence on the ideals and political structure of American society. Using the emphasis on local political control as an example of influences emerging from the frontier, Turner writes of the settlement of the West, "There is a strain of fierceness in their energetic petitions demanding self-government under the theory that every people have the right to establish their own political institutions in an area which they have won from the wilderness." 248.

Rowlandson's first captivity tale[142] and a variety of accounts of "the Great Dismal," a vast swampland in North Carolina.[143]

In Neubauer's description, early colonial literature reveals a relationship to nature in which its threatening characteristics have not yet been drawn as representing aspects of the human psyche. "In the early confrontation between American woman/man and American nature the terror of the landscapes is not interpreted either psychologically or metaphysically, the natural environment is not categorically distinguished from the human engagement in it…"[144] By declaring that nature is not (yet) interpreted psychologically in these descriptions, Neubauer means that nature's antagonism represents an external force threatening individual development rather than a subconscious conflict requiring catharsis. Neubauer writes that the "…fundamental experience of the self in these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century landscapes is already one of individualization – the human comes to see nature only through his/her subjective vision."[145] Nature during colonial development was a constant factor in the daily lives of the settlers and thus had not been relegated to the position of symbolizing psychological conflict, as Neubauer argues increasingly occurs with later depictions of antagonistic nature.

An oft-cited vision of colonial America was the collective effort of constructing a culture based on the potential for prosperity viewed as lying dormant in the land. In literature, Neubauer asserts, the key conflict between the promise and terror of the land during this period is created by the extent to which nature resisted attempts to exploit its resources. Analyzing descriptions drawn from the records of explorers from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, Neubauer remarks:

> …the fundamental reaction to the different sites and situations encountered on these early voyages was that of wonder…. That pattern of optimism and expansionism can be traced down through the different phases of the colonial, then U.S.-American civilizations and their different kinds of frontiers. Wonder, however, could quickly give way to other degrees as well as kinds of surprise, and the pioneering program of self-assertion ran repeatedly into snares and snags when confronted with natural phenomena not in accordance with the trust in Devine providence and the promises of progress.[146]

[142] "The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed"
[143] Among those discussing the problem of developing the Great Dismal cited by Neubauer are William Drummond, William Byrd II and George Washington
[144] Neubauer, 364.
[145] Neubauer, 364.
[146] Neubauer, 347-8.

In this early vision of America, according to Neubauer, divine depictions of nature evoking "wonder" are often associated with the resources they offer for profit. Contrastingly, impediments to exploitation and expansion create a more antagonistic perception of nature if not always as "terrifying," then at least as forcing man to adapt. In Turner, this adaptation to obstacles in order to fulfill Manifest Destiny and expand across the frontier produces pioneer values in no less divinely inspired a way than the testing of Christian values by a hazardous environment in colonial literature cited by Neubauer. While not antagonistic in an anthropomorphized form, the colonial vision of nature as terrifying involves the wilderness as home to the enemies of pious colonial culture. Exploring this theme, Neubauer turns to Mary Rowlandson's "Captivity Tale" in which the farmstead is surrounded by forests teeming with bloodthirsty indigenous savages. In Rowlandson's Narrative, Neubauer argues that:

> Nature, which we encounter here as both literal and biblical wilderness, is God's testing ground for both man and woman; this promised land (i.e. New England) is holding both terrors and delights, the chance for a model Puritan Christianity and the threat of its bedeviled perversion and ruin through wickedness and evil infiltrations from an ungodly environment.[147]

Thus, while the environment in these early descriptions may play host to evil spirits or violent antagonists, as a place it is essentially neutral, allowing man's virtue or vice to determine how the wilderness will impact his actions. Neubauer describes the dangerous wilderness in Rowlandson's account as a result of the world perverted by original sin in which the virtue of Puritan society is evidenced by the degree of their success in accordance with the "…Calvinist concept of pre-determination with its topical correspondence of worldly success and otherworldly election."[148]

Continuing his discussion of nature as impediment to progress, Neubauer explores George Washington's attempts at cultivating the Virginian swamp known as the Great Dismal. In this case the pioneer ideals of adaptability and belief in ingenuity are thwarted by natural forces suggesting that nature, at least in the form of harsh wilderness spaces, determines the extent of its own exploitation.

> The Great Dismal… turned its reputation of terror into a continuing story of frustration for Washington…. The company finally gave up on its agricultural designs and started to harvest the trees…. Thus a signal attempt of cultivating the wilderness, of transforming a useless tract of swamp into an agriculturally productive piece of usable real estate, failed utterly. The enlightened rationality of the American

[147] Neubauer, 350.
[148] Neubauer, 350.

> Revolution was frustrated in its own backyard – and the Great Dismal kept its aura of ungovernability, unknowability, and natural mystery up into the twentieth century.[149]

As Neubauer notes, only by shifting the focus of financial gain from agriculture to timber is profit finally achieved by Washington's company. While Rowlandson's narrative describes the terror of American nature by the savagery of its inhabitants as an impediment to social development, the wilderness itself acts as the impediment in the accounts of the Great Dismal, seeming to express the conflict between a strong faith in man's mental faculties as a tool to conquer nature and the raw antagonism of nature's forces discussed by Fromm. In both Rowlandson's narrative and the descriptions of Washington's struggles against the Great Dismal, the American wilderness acts as an impediment to progress, an antagonistic force highlighting the Enlightenment association of mind with divinity. Thus, while not religiously oriented in the same manner as the demonic forest of Rowlandson's tale, the Great Dismal also seems a perversity to the human spirit in its resistance to the efforts of human ingenuity. In this early period of American literature, nature's antagonism is too prevalent in daily life to be valued for its evocation of virtues in the pioneer spirit (retrospectively glorified by Turner), or to be taken as evidence of psychological conflict as natural depictions would commonly function in the later period of American Gothic literature.

Turning now to the extension of this conflict between harsh lands and a quintessential American faith in adaptability in modernity, depictions of dangerous wilderness in a variety of artistic works from the twentieth century will be discussed through the archetypical symbol of the "borderlands" in order to better understand contemporary forms of the relationship between nature and culture. As easily tilled lands grew in population toward the end of the frontier period, arid desert regions and other wild or dangerous areas previously defined often only as borderlands in relation to more arable regions of the continent (and ignored on the basis of harsh conditions) became appealing prospects for those who sought to chase the rewards of the frontier. Emerging out of this late period of frontier development, the association of desolate environments with economic reward was incorporated into Turner's pioneer ideals and finds continuing representation in many works of the twentieth century. Modern manifestations of the "profitable borderlands" motif in fiction however, often incorporate the conditions of modernity in their description, most notably the lack of empty lands and the seemingly inescapable forces of societal control. In science fiction for example,

[149] Neubauer, 352.

this has produced a variety of post-apocalyptic visions of the borderlands.[150] Nostalgic of the lost freedom of the frontier, books such as Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Liebowitz*, Phillip K. Dick's *Dr. Bloodmoney* and Ursula LeGuinn's *Always Coming Home*, as well as the films "Mad Max," "Slipstream," and "Waterworld" envision a future in which the only viable outside space available for escape from the dictates of modernity entails a fated destruction of humanity and/or the environment, often as a result of man's own technology.[151] Alternatively, the Earth is abandoned for new frontiers on other worlds far from the forces of Earth's governments in novels such as Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy or *Cities in Flight* by James Blish.[152] This romanticization of post-apocalyptic and otherworldly frontier conditions seems to indicate nostalgia for the complexity of individual life before industrialization as it provides imagined possibilities for a rejuvenation of personal capability and self-sufficiency in the face of harsh natural conditions.[153]

The characterization of the frontiersman as the rugged progressive outgrowth of civilized society into the wilderness has also changed in modern descriptions, as the harsh natural environments of borderlands are increasingly viewed as threatened by the advance of civilization. In many cases, the historic frontiersman venturing into the wilderness to make his fortune has been treated as a conservationist in the late twentieth century, in opposition to the frontiersman's earlier characterization as a heroic exploiter, conquering the environment for the advancement of civilization. This shift in characterization can be seen in the evolution of Western films of the twentieth century. While early westerns such as "The Painted Desert" (1931), "The Outlaw" (1943) and "Vengeance Valley" (1951) are more historically accurate in their depiction of cowboys as ranching entrepreneurs, Westerns from the 60s on, most notably the works of Sergio Leone such as "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" (1966) and "Once Upon a Time in the West" (1968) tend to describe entrepreneurialism primarily as a

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[150] Since Jules Verne and the early days of science fiction, the genre has proven itself to be continuously on the forefront of exploring the possible effects on culture of the growth of technology. Thus, I would argue, since the industrial revolution, science fiction ought to be viewed as a key resource in understanding the changes in cultural perception occurring with modernization.

[151] As I argued in the second chapter, escapism is a key theme in America's relationship to nature as a result of colonial and frontier definitions of the American continent. Walter M. Miller Jr., *A Canticle for Liebowitz* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1976). Phillip K. Dick, *Dr. Bloodmoney* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2002). Ursula LeGuinn, *Always Coming Home* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1985). "Mad Max," dir. George Miller, prod. Byron Kennedy, Orion Pictures, 1993. "Slipstream," dir. Stephen Lisberger, prod. Gary Kurtz, Management Company Entertainment Group/Virgin Vision, 1989. "Waterworld" dir. Kevin Reynolds, prod. Kevin Costner, Universal Pictures, 1995.

[152] Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars* (New York, NY: Bantam Books,1993). Idem, *Green Mars* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1994). Idem, *Blue Mars* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1996). James Blish, *Cities in Flight* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2000).

[153] This is a reference to Wendell Berry's "The Agricultural Crisis as a Crisis of Culture" as discussed in the first chapter.

vehicle of the destruction of western culture.[154] Made nostalgic by the often claustrophobic treatment of society in the theme of escapism, the West as the arena of the settler, a creator of culture and society, has been replaced with an ethics of conservationism surrounding the heroic cowboy. In response, the cowboy is often treated as an escapist character holding out against the slow march of Eastern urbanism and technology while defending a sparsely populated wilderness that seems to fulfil the needs of individual development.[155]

In the late 1800s, as the last borderland regions (in particular the Southwest) underwent pioneer settlement, the collective energies of both government and industry were needed to finish the development of the frontier. Conservation of resources and the need for "scientific farming" are cited by Turner as arising with this period of increased federal involvement in cultivating the desert, and may have contributed to the cultural conflict between the borderlands and the advance of civilization often presented in the cowboy mystique.[156] This war between capitalist progress and conservationism is also represented in modern tales describing the heroic battle between technology and extreme conditions in those borderlands still existing during the twentieth century such as the Arctic and Antarctic regions, the deep sea and space. Modern newscasts and documentaries regularly display the endeavours of oil miners and satellite engineers, heroic as symbols of the triumph of humanity over the elements, while equally valorizing the frozen camps and deep sea capsules of conservationist natural scientists. Thus conservationism as an aesthetic in literature and film is modernity's means of equating the borderlands of the present with those lost in the past. Paradoxically, however, the exploitation of these regions also finds representation as heroic in much the same way as capitalist frontiersmen have been transformed into heroes exemplifying the pioneer ideals of adaptation and the overcoming of natural obstacles.

Following his discussion of Washington and the Great Dismal, Neubauer next turns to *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* (1799) by Charles Brockden Brown, in which the theme of antagonistic nature turns away from the form of impediment to progress. By describing the association of dangerous wilderness with the psyche in Brown's tale, Neubauer

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[154] "The Painted Desert," dir. Howard Higgin, prod. E. B. Derr, RKO Radio Pictures, 1931. "The Outlaw," dir. Howard Hughes, prod. Howard Hughes, 1943. "Vengeance Valley," dir. Richard Thorpe, prod. Nicholas Nayfack, M.G.M., 1951. "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," dir. Sergio Leone, prod. Alberto Grimaldi, United Artists, 1966. "Once Upon a Time in the West," dir. Sergio Leone, prod. Bino Cicogna, Paramount, 1968.
[155] "The theme that machinery marks the death of the West is played over and over again in Westerns…. There is mostly a deep sense of loss, perpetuated by a vague sort of nostalgia for the former age of heroes. There is no sense that it was paradise lost, but it was a time of clearer moral distinctions, and a time when passion was not sucked out of the system by rules and laws…" Peter A. French *Cowboy Metaphysics, Ethics and Death in Westerns* (Oxford, England: Rowman & Littlefield publishers, Inc., 1997), 143-6.
[156] Turner, 293-4.

explores the rise of the Gothic equation of the savage in nature with the savage in man's subconscious. In Brown's tale, the rational and inherently optimistic Edgar Huntly pursues a murderer through a wilderness whose hazards force the protagonist into conflict with nature's savage side. According to Neubauer, the conflict between nature's savagery and Huntly's rationalism is intended to reveal the assault on man's psychological integrity produced by realizations of the primal order of the world.

> Confronted with these dramatic encounters and surprise reversals in his attempt to get at the source of Clithero's secret, Huntly had left the local community and the cultivated Pennsylvanian landscape in order to face the truth about his *alter ego* and thus about himself in primal nature. The many moments of horror… develop a psychology of terror from the outside wilderness and transpose it into the inner wilderness of the human psyche, rendering Edgar Huntly a somnambulist in his grasp of reality both waking and sleep…[157]

Though on one level, the wilderness acts as an impediment to Huntly's pursuits, Neubauer explains that the scene more importantly reveals that nature's antagonism has the effect of forcing him to recognize or associate with savage elements of his own character.

Further developing his discussion of the relationship to nature portrayed in Gothic literature, Neubauer returns to the swamplands which confounded Washington with an analysis of Thomas Moore's poem "The Lake of the Dismal Swamp." In this poem a heartbroken lover, mourning for the death of his lady, journeys into the Great Dismal seeking her ghost which only the mythic primal power of the swamp can allow him access too. Noting that the swamp in this poem functions in a similar manner to the wilderness of Brown's narrative, Neubauer's interpretation of Moore's poem reveals the Great Dismal as the location of mythic forces allowing the darker qualities of the subconscious – in this case the search for an undoubtedly blasphemous reunion with the dead – a safe deification through their externalization into the environment. The swamp and its mythic forces are surrounded by a feeling of ethical ambiguity in the face of communal values and religious doctrine, as if the nature of their true form is not meant to be fully understood by mortals: "…Moore's ballad transports the individual complaint of his lover over his lost love onto an American scenery of natural sublime – between this world and another, between the civilized and the wild, between the settlers and the natives, and between the terrible and the marvelous."[158] Moore's poem describes the Great Dismal's resistance to human endeavor as proof of its transcendent status as hallowed ground – a nexus between man and the divine where he is

[157] Neubauer, 355.
[158] Neubauer, 357.

confronted with unknown truths about himself. Additionally, the ethical neutrality of the swamp's deified status shows the development of a cultural separation between the understanding of the psyche and the condition of man described by traditional Christianity.

The Gothic connection between the psyche, wilderness and the divine often acts in 19th century literature as a social critique of the values emerging in the wake of mechanization and the decline of agrarian culture's dominance. Neubauer explains "From the ballads and lyrics on death and disaster to the poems and sonnets on nature as wonder, the evocation of the sublime in its awfulness works as a warning, a reflection of humanity's hubris and a comment on the moral decline of the American civilization."[159] That the gothic mode can be read as a warning of progress may be seen to support the continuing importance of the Jeffersonian ideal at the onset of the Gilded Age. Neubauer considers the criticism of the Gothic mode as leveled primarily at the fragmenting effects of differentiation occurring with mechanization.

> The portrayal of nature as terrifying in popular American poetry during the nineteenth century can be seen as a controlling mechanism against the increasing tendencies of individualization and differentiation – thus an attempt at stabilizing a frightened bourgeoisie culture through the emotional engagement of its reading public.[160]

While the gothic form criticizes the developments of the Gilded Age, "stabilizing" can be read in this description as creating a cohesive literary consciousness geared towards the progression of an urban mentality allowing the emerging modernity catharsis in relation to its sense of the loss of the vision of an agrarian utopia (as with Turner's pioneer ideals). By connecting the land to the human psyche, the moral decline felt as occurring with modernization is placated by a return of the land to its transcendent status glorified by Jefferson during the predominantly agrarian culture of the frontier period.

In modern fiction, the Gothic association of the wilderness with the subconscious is often colored by the replacement of local-oriented consciousness with abstract national ideology as discussed in chapter one. Parallels can be drawn between Moore's poem and Mary Austin's *The Land of Little Rain* in the felt separation of pioneers from the national consciousness as they accept the transcendent mandates of harsh wilderness. Dangerous or harsh environments and their corresponding mythologies in works like Austin's and Moore's seem often forgotten in the homogenization of a national definition of cultural traits. Thus through Turner's development of a national character based on pioneer values, many of the

[159] Neubauer, 364.
[160] Neubauer, 364.

differences in the way communities relate to their unique local environments are muted when portrayed to the general American public. That a perception of the traditions of these localities persists often creates a conflict between a national conception of American culture's relationship with the land (as an abstract symbol) and the relationship to land specific to various localities.

Exaggerated descriptions of antagonistic rural cultures and communities such as those found in the films "Deliverance" and "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" can be seen as a peculiar offshoot of this conflict.[161] In descriptions of local culture such as these, rural villains become nearly indistinguishable from the harsh environments they inhabit, a fulfillment of the Gothic mode in that the harshness of nature is synonymous with the savagery of the subconscious. However, as representations of American culture's relationship to nature in modernity, their use of the Gothic mode connecting nature to the subconscious reveals new elements of our relationship to nature. In both of these films, entering the natural realm of the antagonists means entering into a world outside of the movement of time (because nature does not evidence the changing effects of progress, except perhaps at its borders) thus suggesting an immortality in the timelessness of natural-born terror. Furthermore the encroachment of civilization into these areas without recognizing the local relationship of communities to the natural world means that the antagonists can be associated with vengeance on the part of nature in that its misuse and untouched existence only as harsh and/or desiccated spaces is a part of what connects these antagonists to their environments.[162]

Discussing Madison Cawein's sonnet "Caverns," which describes an excursion into Kentucky's Collosal Cave, as an example of the common portrayal of nature during the Gilded Age, Neubauer further clarifies the concept of the gothic form as implicitly criticizing social development at the end of the nineteenth century. Neubauer writes that the depiction of "…sentimentalized nature answers the Gilded Age's hunger for sensations without a breach of societal decorum, transforming the individual's feeling of awe into a culture of heightened and intensified emotions."[163] Cawein's use of sublime threatening landscapes to express anti-human qualities may be seen as foreshadowing modern descriptions of such places as the sites of "heroic nature,"[164] and yet indicates that this passive modern description had not fully supplanted rigorous human engagement with these areas in the Gilded Age. In other words

[161] "Deliverence," dir. John Boorman, prod. John Boorman, Warner Bros., 1972. "Texas Chainsaw Massacre," dir. Tobe Hooper, prod. Tobe Hooper, Bryanston Distributing Company, 1974.
[162] Neglect of the environment and thus of the subconscious in gothic description also fulfills the Cthulhu mode which will be discussed shortly.
[163] Neubauer, 359.
[164] Agnew and Smith

such sites of dangerous and sublime nature are not yet valued solely as nostalgic fantasy or limited glimpses of transcendent truth. Neubauer writes further of Cawein

> It has become the American poet's office to evoke the magnitude of phenomena in American nature which seem likely to disappear behind the large-scale agricultural perusal and the increasingly industrial usage of natural 'resources' as such. Through metaphors of conflict, battle and death, Cawein attempts to empower Nature with suprahuman forces which are at least potentially anti-human – and to charge them emotionally or rather sentimentally.[165]

The terror of the landscape acts in these literary depictions from the Gilded Age as an attempt at protecting the theme of nature's influence on culture from an experience of modernity as increasingly disconnected from the environment. As nature's criticism of complex society becomes muted by modernity, the literary depictions of nature's terror can be seen as representing a fear of the loss of our ability to look to nature for guidance (the divine sanctioning of America's rural culture by the land) as well as the loss of a ruggedness of spirit with which Americans had always felt they could conquer nature's threats.

While the sections of Neubauer's essay exploring the narratives of Brown, Moore and Cawein discuss dangerous wilderness as the location of transcendent forces whose primary role is to teach man truths about himself and society, Neubauer analyzes newspaper descriptions of the "Great Cyclone" which struck St. Louis in 1896, to explore mythic nature as more clearly antagonistic to the buildup of complex society. In the first chapter of this thesis, urbanization was cited as a key element in the separation of American culture from its natural environment. Through the Great Cyclone, Neubauer discusses this separation produced by urbanization in relation to natural disasters.

> The very complexity of this modern city both insulated its citizens from the direct exposure to the elements and nature-dominated environments and allowed for the catastrophic consequences of such a natural calamity – in one word: urbanization had amplified the natural hazards. No disaster zone could be more horrifying than a destroyed cityscape, where the growing density of the population guaranteed a directly proportional increase in the body count.[166]

Through this description, the relationship of the urban setting to natural disasters reveals a key shift in the depiction of nature's relationship to culture during the Gilded Age. While the mythic portrayal of threatening nature occurring in the rural descriptions of Brown, Cawein, and Moore contain varying degrees of both benevolence and antagonism, human in their

[165] Neubauer, 359.
[166] Neubauer, 362.

connection to the psyche, natural catastrophes in the urban setting represent a distinctly antihuman form of antagonism. With this separation from the human element, the gothic mode of portraying nature's mythic character as a means of illuminating the subconscious is sublimated, the prophetic purposes of mythic nature drawn away from human understanding. As benevolent transcendence and the social proscriptions of nature are no longer easily accessible in the urban environment, and as nature's forces are felt strongest in the antagonistic form of catastrophe, mythic depictions of nature are often expressed as diabolical at the turn of the twentieth century.

Paralleling the mythic portrayal of the natural world in these Gothic tableaus discussed by Neubauer, is the creation of symbolism related to urban and cultivated settings in representations from the twentieth century. Whether as antagonistic or merely as forces transcending the individual, the technological sublime of machines and skyscrapers marching alongside cultural mind concepts (such as that of "zeitgeist") are raised to symbolic levels where they are often portrayed as dictating how man will act in the modern world. In many cases the terminology of nature is transposed upon the cityscape so that savagery once identified in the wilderness as a safe and separate means of acknowledging the subconscious is made either indistinguishable from the realm of human affairs or acts as a vehicle for ethical separation between the individual and society through his abhorrence of the savage.[167]

In another twist on the cultured space versus borderlands motif, descriptions in crime and noir fiction of the urban environment as a man-made wilderness are often pitted against spaces outside the city as darker extensions of the savagery of criminal endeavours. In these descriptions, the violent competition of predatory species is transposed into either legal/corporate and political culture (a conformist mode) or criminal/underworld culture (an anti-conformist mode). The urban setting is often described using jungle or other dangerous nature metaphors, suggesting that the (previously external) experience of threatening wilderness has merged with human culture in the absence of outside nature. In these depictions, the borderlands at the edges of the city contain a savagery not based on their natural qualities, but rather act as an extension of the savagery of the city itself. The wilderness outside the city regularly serves as the location where mobsters are freer to torture victims, bury bodies and pursue other nefarious goals, or it becomes the wastelands where homeless or forgotten people dwell full of spite for the culture that has rejected them.

[167] A scene from Maurice Sendak's popular children's book *Where The Wild Things Are* expresses this theme of the wilderness brought into cultivated spaces perfectly with a visual sequence in which the protagonist child Max's bedroom slowly transforms into a forest as he identifies with the "wild thing" within. Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*, (New York, NY: HarperFestival, 1992).

Examples of this theme include many of the classic films of crime fiction: "Double Indemnity," "Chinatown," "Casino," and "The Godfather."[168]

In contrast to the depiction of the city as the realm of human savagery is the theme of the hyper-complex society portrayed in many works of science fiction. Novels such as George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*, Aldous Huxley's *A Brave New World*, and Phillip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (made into the film "Bladerunner") all depict oppressive social structures as the result of an ethically relativistic rationalism.[169] In these novels, an authoritarian social structure embodies the savagery of the subconscious as a clear warning of the effects of development without empathy or the humility provided by confronting man's darker drives. These examples of both crime fiction and science fiction as well as Neubauer's discussion of the Great Cyclone are all slightly divergent from the Gothic mode in that the connection of a savage environment to the psyche does not provide easy access to psychological truths that would further individual development. Instead this subconscious savagery has been divorced from the role of mythic proscription through a sublimation process separating man from his subconscious. This sublimation process is the key facet of the last nature/culture relationship discussed by Neubauer embodied in the Cthulhu myth.

Following from the rejection of mythic proscriptions in nature discussed in relation to the Great Cyclone, Neubauer turns to the works of H. P. Lovecraft at the beginning of the twentieth century.

> …in these narrations the normalcy of backwoods New England during the Depression becomes an increasingly transparent cover for a darker reality, the hidden horrors of evil aliens, cosmic creatures of nameless terror and insane rites and rituals too terrible to voice in human speech or render in plain English. The inhuman and anti-human nature of these forces of evil becomes obvious when the human imagination is trapped, the unwary and the overly curious are turned into helpless co-authors of a series of sins and sacrileges against human decency and reason – and the very fate of humanity, the safety of the planet earth is at risk.[170]

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[168] "Double Indemnity," dir. Billy Wilder, prod. Buddy G. DeSylva, Paramount Pictures, 1944. "Chinatown," dir. Roman Polanski, prod. Robert Evans, Paramount Pictures, 1974. "Casino," dir. Martin Scorsese, prod. Barbara De Fina, Universal Pictures, 1995. "The Godfather," dir. Francis Ford Coppola, prod. Albert S. Ruddy, Paramount Pictures, 1972.

[169] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty Four* (Jackson Hole, WY: Archeion Press, 2007).Aldous Huxley, *A Brave New World* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1989). Phillip K. Dick *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968). "Bladerunner," dir. Ridley Scott, prod. Michael Deeley, Warner Bros., 1982.

[170] Neubauer, 362-3.

In the Cthulhu myth the gothic mechanism of using the wilderness to understand savage drives in our unconscious seems to have been lost through the buildup of complex society.[171] The gothic wilderness is understood in this form as a past stage of human interaction with nature, still affecting us through the depths of our psyche but not directly accessible to us for guidance as the mandates of this subconscious wilderness defy the ethics of progress connected to reason and modern values. The terrors of the Cthulhu myth, therefore appear to be a direct reaction to the separation from nature resulting from the emergence of modernity. While the Gothic form placed mythic nature at the borders of an often pastoral community, the pastoral form itself is mutated by Lovecraft, Neubauer writes "This popular fiction of horror takes pleasure in evoking dread and doom behind the seemingly pastoral, spelling out the nightmares of the modern American psyche in the very heart of the old Puritan settlements."[172]

The Cthulhu myth is really the inauguration of a key part of what makes the contemporary artistic representations throughout this chapter often dissonant or negative to the perspective of modernity. As the mythic in nature is sublimated in the culture of modernity without accompanying natural space outside the human realm for discussion (as is present with the gothic), its threatening side becomes increasingly disconnected from what is commonly perceived of the human psyche. Ancient, immortal, or transcendent of human action, depictions of nature in the later half of the twentieth century following along the lines of the Cthulhu myth define nature as inhuman or antihuman. The role of Cthulhu, an ancient evil connected to human action at some point in the forgotten past, often finds characterization as the pollution of the environment through human industry and technology. Our awareness of human refuse as a threatening element of surrounding nature is discussed as "toxic consciousness" by Cynthia Deitering in her essay "The Postnatural Novel: Toxic Consciousness in the fiction of the 1980s." For Deitering the 1980s saw a change in our relationship to the nature in that:

> ...we came to perceive, perhaps inchoately, our own complicity in postindustrial ecosystems, both personal and national, which are predicated on pollution and waste. My premise is that during the 1980s we began to perceive ourselves as inhabitants of a culture defined by its waste.... What has happened recently... is a transmutation of Heidegger's

[171] Michel Foucault's study of the separation of the insane from society is another way in which those areas of the subconscious not palatable by modernity have been sublimated. Foucault considers madness to be the polar opposite of reason, and discusses the separation of "the mad" from society as a means of "…guard[ing] against the subterranean danger of unreason…" Stephen Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1991), 41.
[172] Neubauer, 363.

> essence of technology in which what we have previously regarded and represented as the standing reserve of nature and material objects has been virtually used up. Thus, what we call the Real is now represented not as the standing-reserve but as the already-used-up.[173]

A variety of horror and science fiction use the toxic effects of man to evoke Cthulhu-type villains – from the many "Godzilla" films in which nuclear testing awakens an ancient god to "The Toxic Avenger" a superhero created by refuse, or "Swamp Thing" an elemental spirit angered at the pollution of swamplands in the American South.[174]

In Lovecraft's writing, the ancient evils of Cthulhu are often awoken by nefarious human magicians whose knowledge of the occult allows them to act as catalysts for the evils lying outside the safe rationality of modern consensus. In more recent variations of the Cthulhu myth, scientists often take on this role, their characterization raised to nearly mythic levels as a result of the potential effects of their influence on humanity. Two characterizations of the scientist as an agent of Cthulhu are the "dangerous scientist" and the "artificialist."

The dangerous scientist, often with accompanying doomsday devise, is a modern reworking of the Faust myth in which the physical world (or the scientific understanding of which) has become the satanically seductive realm of mind and truth. The dangerous scientist's knowledge of science fills the role of the occult for the Cthulhu magician – the laws of the physical universe seemingly equally as powerful in their effects as the knowledge of ancient gods. In the increasingly urbanized and culture-concerned consciousness of modernity, and as a result of specialization and the rapid progress of technology, the scientist's world of natural laws has become far removed from the common individual's understanding of nature. The democratisation of science cited by Lynn White Jr.[175] has developed in the modern world a technocracy in which scientists (seemingly less ethical or possessing of humanistic traits than the common man due to the time they spend studying the

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[173] Cynthia Deitering, "The Postnatural Novel: Toxic Consciousness in the fiction of the 1980s." in *The Ecocriticism Reader, Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 197-9.

[174] "Godzilla," dir. Ishiro Honda, prod. Tomoyuki Tanaka, Toho, 1954. "The Toxic Avenger," dir. Lloyd Kaufman, prod. Micheal Herz, Troma Entertainment, 1986. "Swamp Thing," dir. Wes Craven, prod. Benjamin Melniker, Embassy Pictures, 1982.

[175] In his essay…, White writes "Science was traditionally aristocratic, speculative, intellectual in intent; technology was lower-class, empirical, action-oriented. The quite sudden fusion of these two, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, is surely related to the slightly prior and contemporary democratic revolutions which, by reducing social barriers, tended to assert a functional unity of brain and hand. Our ecologic crisis is the product of an emerging, entirely novel, democratic culture." Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis" in *The Ecocriticism Reader, Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 5-6.

inhuman world) search the *telos* (structure of physical laws) of the universe for superhuman powers. But the sublimated dialogue comparing the exploitative natural world of the scientist to the transcendent influences of nature on ethics and aesthetics, makes the scientist a thief. Seeming to discard the aesthetic and ethical mandates of nature, the scientist uses his Faustian intellect and progressive greed to keep the developments of his efforts in the realm of "the real" – that is, external of the cultural sphere but with the threatening capability to alter its fate. Films such as "Dr. Strangelove" and "Twelve Monkeys" express the dangerous scientist as the architect of apocalypse, while in novels such as Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* and Poul Anderson's *Harvest of Stars*, the dangerous scientist engineers new beings which usurp humanity as the dominant species.[176]

Unlike the "dangerous scientist," the "artificialist" (the constructor of an artificial reality) is commonly not portrayed as an evil character other than when his creation begins to affect others negatively (and in this case, he can also be connected to the theme of Faust). The artificialist represents the ability to create outside space using a *telos* of human design. The result of the artificialist's tale in many cases however ends with a reaffirmation of the real world through a recognition of the limitations for development provided by an artificial world based on human design. This reaffirmation can be used to suggest two social ethics related to modernity's disconnection from nature: a cultural desire (in many depictions of the artificialist) to reaffirm the transcendence of an external world through the clarification of the individual's role in relation to nature, and a denunciation of progress in that, for all the artificialist's technological knowledge, he has not created anything of more value than that which already exists in nature. Neubauer describes the victims in Lovecraft's tales as "…hav[ing] become so estranged from… nature… that they now see themselves as divorced from both the outside and from their past not only ethnically, culturally, or ideologically – but ontologically."[177] A few modern films, such as David Cronenberg's "Videodrome" and "Existenz," describe artificial realities that seem to transcend or replace the physical world, however there is always a strong feeling of disease/unrest in the basing of such artificial realities on human design.[178] In films in which the artificialist's world has assumed complete control of human consciousness, the real world outside often takes the form of Cthulhu instilling a fear of the truth in the blind victims of the artificial world. The "real" as Cthulhu

[176] "Dr. Strangelove," dir. Stanley Kubrick, prod. Stanley Kubrick, Columbia Pictures, 1964. "Twelve Monkeys," dir. Terry Gilliam, prod. Charles Roven, Universal Pictures, 1995. Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2008). Poul Anderson *Harvest of Stars* (New York, NY: TOR, 1993).
[177] Neubauer, 363-4.
[178] "Videodrome," dir. David Cronenberg, prod. Claude Heroux, Universal Studios, 1983. "Existenz," dir. David Cronenberg, prod. David Cronenberg, Alliance Atlantis, 1999.

can be seen as an element of many films from the last couple decades including "The Matrix," "Vanilla Sky," "The Truman Show," and "Dark City."[179] The Cthulhu mythos can therefore be seen as a continuation of the Gothic theme, but reinterprets this theme in the terms of modernity in which contemporary culture has insulated itself from external nature and thus from the subconscious as well.

Through Neubauer's essay, the evolution of threatening and antagonistic depictions of nature in literature reveals a slow process whereby the (in this case negative) influences of nature on culture are sublimated through the shift into modernity, re-emerging only as the repressed nightmares of a forgotten relationship to the environment. In the early days of colonization, nature as a non-mythic impediment to progress and development battled against the pioneer's sense of adaptability and the optimism he held for America's future. In the 1800s, the gothic mode of associating the wilderness with the subconscious was used both as a means of critiquing social progress and exploring man's inherent savagery. With the rise of modernity, the dominance of the urban perspective is seen to sublimate the gothic form producing the terror of the Cthulhu myth in which the subconscious is resurrected in uncontrollable forms. Modern representations of all three of these depictions of antagonistic nature reveal that, while muted by the experience of modernity, past incarnations of the relationship between nature and culture persist in American culture.

[179] "The Matrix," dir. The Wachowski brothers, prod. Joel Silver, Warner Bros., 1999. "Vanilla Sky," dir. Cameron Crowe, prod. Cameron Crowe, Paramount Pictures, 2001. "The Truman Show," dir. Peter Weir, prod. Scott Rudin, Paramount Pictures, 1998. "Dark City," dir. Alex Proyas, prod. Alex Proyas, New Line Cinema, 1998.

Conclusion

From early colonization to the closing of the frontier, the perception of nature was intimately tied to the belief in a divine design for the development of American culture and society. Early colonial literature describes the harshness and moral neutrality of the wilderness as the empty testing grounds of primal nature in which the colonists were charged with developing Christian civilization. Built on Enlightenment social philosophy and the separatist radicalism of the American revolution, this early view of heavenly design also involved the creation of a society which would escape the faults perceived in European civilization. In these perceptions of America's future, nature functioned as the catalyst for a design transcending both the colonists and the land.

As American society spread across the continent and the Eastern seaboard grew more populous, the agrarian experience of the frontier began to exert more influence over the perception of America's transcendent design. In the mid-1800s the conception of American culture as divinely chosen became increasingly associated with the freedom and simplicity of small agrarian communities. Manifest Destiny complimented Jeffersonian ideology in this perception, promising an endless wealth of land for the development of an agriculturally based society. The use of nature and the agrarian lifestyle as a position from which to criticize the perceived faults of over-populated European society was broadened in the 1800s to also criticize urbanism and the rise of complex social and political systems that might threaten the future of an agrarian Eden. Thoreau's writings seem to parallel Jacksonian politics in this period – the development of the spirit by nature supporting the competitive individualism of the frontiersman. Conversely, Emerson's vision suggests a more interconnected society in which the agrarian lifestyle would be enhanced rather than diminished by mechanization. Beyond the borders of small rural communities, the wilderness continued to exert a mythic influence over the literary imagination of American authors during the late frontier period in the gothic perception of nature as a mediator between man's rationality and the subconscious.

As the late frontier period gave way to the Gilded Age, American society was forced to confront the changes modernization would have on its predominantly agrarian society. The Populist movement can be seen as epitomizing the cultural conflicts of this period, as the independent frontiersman turned to greater federal control and political complexity for defense against the shifting power balance from countryside to city. Mechanization, industry and free-market capitalism increasingly altered the socioeconomic landscape of America,

while the rhetoric of the frontiersman was integrated into new avenues of development. Turner's frontier thesis was integral to this process and, through his writings, American culture in the 1890s saw the birth of modern American historicism even as it lamented the death of the frontier. Turner's message was optimistic, the frontier period had ended but it had left a permanent mark on American culture, having shaped political ideology, social institutions and the rugged individualistic traits of a cohesive national identity. Turner's writings describe the veneration of the land and the divine promise of America's future as key aspects of the frontier's legacy and he charged Americans with the duty of remaining true to the progressive impulse learned from westward expansion. Though cities would eventually subsume the countryside, Turner views American culture as created by the unalterable character of the frontiersman and his writings offer little response to the warnings of Jefferson. Literature by the early twentieth century had not maintained Turner's optimism and the psycho-cultural danger of rejecting nature's mythic influence can be seen in Lovecraft's Cthulhu tales.

In the twentieth century, the forces of modernization further insulated American society from the natural world in a variety of ways. Through advances in transportation and communication, American culture increasingly came to represent the homogenous cultural identity described by Turner. But with urban interests acting as the primary instigator of social development, the voice of decentralized rural America was muted by the roar of a supposedly collective national ideology. The communal social structure once complimented by Tocqueville gave way to a nation-wide vision of America produced by the combination of Turner's portrayal of the frontier character and the demands produced by urbanization and technological development. The growth of media technologies further compounded the experience of a unified American culture even as it contributed to the insulation of society from nature's influence by supporting urban cultural dominance. By the 1950s and 60s the skills and decentralized social structure of the frontier were only a memory, cherished in the American imagination but traded for the interdependence and dynamic progress of the modern age.

Modernity had also brought with it new critical paradigms in academia including post-structuralism, multiculturalism and eco-centrism. By redefining the approach of historicism, these various theoretical positions reinterpreted pastoral literature from the frontier period, effectively narrowing the political understanding of past experience and those forms of the nature/culture dichotomy prominent in the cultural imagination of the frontier. But past forms of this dichotomy have persisted in American culture, altered and reinterpreted according to

the conditions of modernity as American culture continues the struggle of making sense of the frontier's ideological legacy in an age where daily interaction with the natural environment has been exorcized from common experience. The three articles that have focused my discussion in this work are all concerned with portraying this paradox of modernity in different ways.

In the first chapter Fromm's essay was analyzed in order to explore the perception of modern society as insulated from nature. Fromm's description of modernity presents urbanization and technological advancement as having muted modern society's relationship to nature's influences such that the world has become primarily defined by social terminology excluding direct interaction with nature from contemporary experience. Using Fromm's essay as a framework for discussing the physical forces of modernization, both the turbulent social landscape of the Gilded Age and the rapid technological developments of the twentieth century have been explored in order to reveal key shifts in American culture's perception of nature. In this chapter, Turner's proposal that innovation and markets would act as a replacement for the frontier in the modern age has been cited as integral to the insulation of society by modernity. This process was accelerated in the twentieth century by technological development, urbanization, and the detachment from communal identity.

The second chapter of this work analyzed the reinterpretation of pastoral literature and nineteenth century society by modern criticism. Principally concerned with the deconstruction of critical positions narrowly defining the politics of pastoral literature, Buell's essay provides a broad study of contemporary literary criticism analyzed in this work to explore both the oversimplification of pastoral narratives by modern criticism and the connection of various political themes in pastoral literature to perceptions of the nature/culture dichotomy in nineteenth century agrarian culture. Buell's support of the position of eco-centrism has also been discussed in this chapter in comparison with the presentation of transcendent nature in nineteenth century literature. This comparison of past and present conceptions of nature as external of culture reveals a shift in the valuation of nature's transcendent qualities coloring the contemporary perception of frontier themes imbedded in the national character. Thus Buell's critique has been used to explore contemporary criticism's contribution to the suppression of the nature-culture relationship experienced during the frontier period as well as a means of judging contemporary criticism as incapable of providing a current perspective of nature which might support Turner's conception of the national character in modernity.

Also based on an essay dealing with literary criticism, the last chapter explored contemporary themes in literature and film presenting the reemergence of past forms of the nature/culture dichotomy sublimated by modernity. Neubauer's essay analyzes a succession of literary depictions of nature as antagonistic to the development American society. By discussing his analysis as essentially presenting three literary forms of the nature/culture relationship, this chapter presented a slow process in the evolution of American literature whereby themes of threatening wilderness have been sublimated by the forces of modernization. Themes of nature as an impediment to progress in colonial literature, the use of the wilderness to confront the psyche in gothic literature, and the antagonism of nature and the subconscious against the insulation of modernity in horror literature at the turn of the twentieth century have all been described as finding continuing representation in contemporary American culture. Through these contemporary representations, the persistence of past perceptions of nature in American culture can be seen as conflicting with the conditions of modernity.

Above all I have emphasized the conflict between the drive for continuous expansion and development – the search for ever new frontiers, and the glorification of divine American nature whose seemingly inevitable loss by modernity is a deep-felt tragedy of our contemporary experience. In his essay entitled "The Problem of the West" Turner wrote:

> The Western man believed in the Manifest Destiny of his country…. Henry Adams, in his History of the United States, makes the American of 1800 exclaim to the foreign visitor, "Look at my wealth! See these solid mountains of salt and iron…. See these magnificent cities…. See my cornfields rustling and waving in the summer breeze…. Look at this continent of mine, fairest of created worlds, as she lies turning up to the sun's never failing caress her broad and exuberant breasts, overflowing with milk for her hundred million children." And the foreigner saw only dreary deserts, tenanted by sparse, ague-stricken pioneers and savages. The cities were log huts and gambling dens. But the frontiersman's dream was prophetic…. He dreamed dreams and beheld visions. He had faith in man, hope for democracy, belief in America's destiny, unbounded confidence in his ability to make his dreams come true.[180]

In exploring the shift into modernity, I hope I have provided some insight into the inherent conflicts of American identity and the pioneer dream. Why, despite a continued belief in American exceptionalism as the product of interaction with nature, Americans sit in their "magnificent cities" often discontent, nostalgically dreaming of the "dreary deserts,"

[180] Turner, 213-214.

“savages,” “log huts and gambling dens” that, for all the hardships they represented, seem to be infused with a guidance of truth no longer existing.

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