

Imagining Cascadia:

Bioregionalism as Environmental Culture in the Pacific Northwest

Ingeborg Husbyn Aarsand



A thesis presented to
The Department of Literature, Area Studies, and European Languages
North American Area Studies
Faculty of Humanities
Advisor: Mark Luccarelli
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MA degree

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Fall 2013

Author: Ingeborg Husbyn Aarsand

Title: Imagining Cascadia: Bioregionalism as Environmental Culture in the Pacific
Northwest

2013

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Print: Representralen, University of Oslo

Abstract

This thesis discusses the usefulness of the concept of bioregionalism as a social and cultural environmental practice, and as a response to the environmental crisis of our time. The thesis addresses an important issue in environmental discourse by considering whether bioregionalism's place-based approach with its ethic of "reinhabitation" could challenge mainstream environmentalism. The thesis raises a critique of today's professionalized and technocratic environmental movement. This thesis will argue that bioregional thinking evokes agrarianism and is indeed useful, because it can offer a "practical utopian" answer to the current environmental catastrophe. It is pragmatic, regionally specific, and reinforces the concept of place as central to the environmental discourse and debate. Ecological utopias have a role to play in environmental thinking because of their transformational power and pragmatic aspects. This thesis will show how the imagined bioregion of "Cascadia" is being constituted in different cultural representations of place, such as narratives about imagined places in music, film, and literature, and how this in turn is "placemaking." This thesis argues that cultural representations of "place," such as narratives about imagined recovery of places, can bring about both desperately needed inspiration for us humans to find local solutions to a global environmental crisis. The thesis is a contribution to American Studies because the discourse of bioregionalism contrasts the dominant narrative of American culture as placeless, in flux, and commodified.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my gratitude to my advisor Mark Luccarelli for his enthusiasm and excellent advice. Thanks to the Nordic Network for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies (NIES) and the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) for letting me be present at your inspiring conferences. Helpful comments and feedback came from Shannon Meghan Crotty, Anna Kaijser, Ida Moen, Trude Myhre and Matti Richoux. Thank you. Håkon Mella - thanks for the food! Finally, thanks to all my dear friends and family inside and outside of Cascadia.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	The Science of Ecology	5
1.2	Bioregionalism and Reinhabitation	7
1.3	Chapter Outline.....	10
1.4	Primary Sources.....	13
2	Environmentalism and Bioregionalism.....	14
2.1	Introduction	14
2.2	Mainstream Environmentalism.....	14
2.3	Radical Environmentalism: Deep Ecology and Social Ecology	16
2.4	Bioregionalism.....	17
2.5	Place Theory and Phenomenology	20
2.6	Heise and the Critique of Bioregionalism	23
2.7	Blood and Soil? Eco-Fascism, Xenophobia, and Territorial Exclusiveness	26
2.8	Broadening Bioregionalism: The Role of the City.....	27
2.9	Conclusion.....	28
3	Bioregionalism and The Pacific Northwest	30
3.1	Introduction	30
3.2	Western Landscapes and American Nationalism	31
3.3	Utopian Settlements in the Pacific Northwest.....	34
3.4	The Age of Environmentalism and Urban Growth	38
3.5	Conclusion.....	45
4	Bioregional Utopias: <i>Ecotopia</i>	46
4.1	Callenbach's <i>Ecotopia</i>	46
4.2	Practical Regionalism.....	50
4.3	Pragmatism and Bioregionalism.....	52
4.4	Conclusion.....	54
5	The Cascadian Imagination.....	56
5.1	Introduction	56
5.2	<i>Occupied Cascadia</i> (2012) – A Phenomenological Reading	58
5.3	Bioregionalism and the Good Life	70
5.4	Conclusion.....	72

6	Cascadian Black Metal as Placemaking.....	75
6.1	Introduction	75
6.2	The Potential of Popular Music to Initiate Change	75
6.3	The Eco-Aesthetics of Music	76
6.4	Green is the New Black: Cascadian Black Metal.....	78
6.5	Exercising our Bioregional Imagination.....	87
6.6	Conclusion.....	91
7	Conclusion.....	92
7.1	Place Lives.....	92
8	Bibliography.....	95
9	Recordings Cited.....	100
10	Appendix	101

1 Introduction

Two years ago I moved from the city of Oslo to the woods of Nordmarka, a popular recreation area on the outskirts of town where there are no shopping malls in sight, only the sounds of birds, the creek, and the occasional chainsaw. I wanted to “live deliberately” and “suck out all the marrow of life” like Henry David Thoreau at Walden Pond in 1845.¹ This was of course a very romantic idea of pastoral subsistence, one I consider came from spending time in the Pacific Northwest. I thought that if I were able to connect with and learn about the place I inhabited, I would become a better person - a solid human rooted in a beautiful place.

When living and traveling in the Pacific Northwest before and during the work on this thesis, I noticed social trends reflecting an engagement with the land: organic farming, urban agriculture, farmers’ markets, berry-picking, bike-riding, and other wholesome activities. I read this as a deliberate relationship with community and place. The humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan describes space as something that can become “place” if we make ourselves familiar with it, if we “endow it with value.”² I started to see these practices as ways to endow spaces with value, transforming them into places.

These regional practices contrasted with the dominant narrative of the American national culture as placeless, in flux and commodified, an image I had grown accustomed to through my studies and through the media. The economic system values movement, with communities and social capital diminishing in the process. However, my own experiences told me something else. People I met seemed to be deeply concerned about making critical, sustainable choices for the social and natural world as a strategy to counter the environmental emergency we are in the midst of. A central premise of this thesis is that we are currently going through an environmental crisis in which humans have become a geological force, leading to climate change, extinction of species, acidification of oceans, and pollution of our water. The Fifth Assessment Report from IPCC in September 2013, stated that human influence on the climate system is now clear. We are at a tipping-point of exponential growth, where the high levels of carbon in the atmosphere will lead to extreme weather and rising sea levels, which in turn will have severe consequences for human life and wildlife alike, turning

¹ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings* (New York/Toronto/London: Bantam Books, Inc., 1962). 172.

² Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1977). 6.

masses of people into refugees and driving many forms of wildlife into extinction. Scientists no longer talk about stopping global warming, but about adapting to it. 2012 was the warmest year on record in the United States. It was too hot to grow corn. 2012 was also the year in which the Arctic melted more rapidly than ever before. Scientists, such as anthropologist and sociologist Bruno Latour, say we have moved from the Holocene era to the Anthropocene era, where human activity is radically transforming the earth. The concept of the Anthropocene means that starting with the industrial revolution, and accelerating from the mid-1900s through modernity, the earth has entered a new geological period, meaning the Holocene period has actually ended. In the Anthropocene, “exponential growth of human activities”³ have radically impacted the earth, and this generates serious concern. It is safe to assume that the scale and urgency of this crisis requires co-operation on a local and global level, and academic interdisciplinary studies can bring science, insight and cultural self-realization to bear on our problems.

It seemed to me that the strategy of the North westerners I met was based on a commitment to the local and social environment, through choosing locally sourced food and volunteering at co-operatives, growing vegetables in their back yards, or collecting rainwater to use in their houses. These local practices seemed like ways to transform spaces into places and led me to the central question of this thesis: How useful is the concept of bioregionalism as an idea and a social and cultural environmental practice in the Pacific Northwest, as a response to the environmental catastrophe of our time?

Peter Berg, Director of the Planet Drum Foundation, and ecologist Raymond Dasmann were the first to define bioregionalism. “A bioregion refers both to geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness – to a place and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place.”⁴ This thesis will argue that bioregional thinking is indeed useful, because it challenges conceptions of nature⁵ as separate from culture, such as the idea that nature is opposed to humans. Bioregionalism can offer both a “practical utopian” answer to the current environmental crisis and an “imaginary place,” which can in turn provide hope. It is

³ J. Rockström, W. Steffen, K. Noone, Å. Persson, F. S. Chapin, III, E. Lambin, T. M. Lenton, M. Scheffer, C. Folke, H. Schellnhuber, B. Nykvist, C. A. De Wit, T. Hughes, S. van der Leeuw, H. Rodhe, S. Sörlin, P. K. Snyder, R. Costanza, U. Svedin, M. Falkenmark, L. Karlberg, R. W. Corell, V. J. Fabry, J. Hansen, B. Walker, D. Liverman, K. Richardson, P. Crutzen, and J. Foley., "Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity," *Ecology and Society* 14(2), no. 32. (2009). 2.

⁴ Peter Berg, *Reinhabiting a Separate Country: A Bioregional Anthology of Northern California* (Planet Drum Foundation, 1978). 6.

⁵ The term nature is a disputed one and what we mean by nature reflects back on our own ideas about what the world is.

pragmatic, regionally specific, solicitous of community, and it reinforces place as central to the environmental discourse and debate.

In this thesis, I will show how bioregional thought is “placemaking,” how cultural representations of place, such as narratives about imagined places in music, literature and other forms of cultural expression, can bring about both desperately-needed inspiration and in turn inspire local solutions to global challenges. This thesis considers whether bioregionalism’s place-based approach with its ethic of “reinhabitation” could challenge mainstream environmentalism’s recent flirtation with non-place-based solutions.

The environmental movement began with the pastoral ideal of American culture and literature, and its appreciation of life in the countryside. Then came the cultural shifts of the 1960s, with its new social movements, student riots and racial and social upheavals. The “age of ecology” made environmentalism a mainstream cause at this time. The environmental grassroots organization The Sierra Club published expensive coffee table books with beautiful photos of pristine nature,⁶ and marine biologist, zoologist and science writer Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring* (1962), both of which helped ignite a public environmental consciousness. The very first Whole Earth Catalogue was published in California by Stewart Brand in 1968, and became an iconic text on how to live sustainably. Paul Erlich’s *The Population Bomb*, published the same year, proposed the idea that overpopulation was to blame for environmental degradation and would lead to a global food shortage. The environmental organization Friends of the Earth was founded in San Francisco in 1969.

The iconic “Blue Planet” picture from *Apollo 17* on December 17, 1972, let us take a proper look at our planet seen from outer space, granting us a new perspective on our vulnerable planet. The very first Earth Day was celebrated April 22, 1970, and was a colossal national event in which 20 million people took part.⁷ In 1971, Barry Commoner published his book *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man, and Technology*, in which he blamed capitalist technology, not overpopulation, for the ecological crisis. Commoner argued that we are all in one boat, the ecosphere, where “Everything is connected to everything else.”⁸ Both liberals and conservatives became environmentalists. President Richard Nixon proposed the Environmental Protection Agency, which began operating in 1970 and made environmental matters a job for the state. In his “State of the Nation” speech in January 1970, he went so far

⁶ Leader David Brower initiated a book series called “the Exhibit Format series” that ran from 1960 to 1969.

⁷ Sharon Monteith, *American Culture in the 1960s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008). 171.

⁸ Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle : Nature, Man, and Technology* (New York: Knopf, 1971). 33.

as to suggest “we make peace with nature.”⁹ This was followed by the Clean Air Act of 1970, the Clean Water Act of 1972, and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, all big successes for this new movement. The first major United Nations conference on the environment, the Earth summit in Stockholm, was organized in 1972. The think tank Club of Rome’s bestseller *Limits to Growth* came out the same year, reminding the public of some of the Malthusian ideas about the dangers of population growth ruining the chances of a utopian society, re-proposed by Erlich in 1968. Geographers John A. Agnew and Jonathan M. Smith illustrate the expansion of the movement by highlighting the increase in the “number of entries under Environment in the New York Times Index. These rose from nine in 1967 to 115 in 1970.”¹⁰

This wave of ecological thinking in the 1960s and 1970s did not solve the problem. Arguably, the environmental movement was hijacked by technocrats who defined the problem as “environmental,” and became mostly concerned with finding technical solutions to problems that were really questions of consumption, power, economics, politics and culture of place. The movement changed from being grass-roots towards one more professionalized top-down day-to-day legislative politics in Washington.

A critique of “mainstream,” “shallow,” or “reform environmentalism” as it has been called, comes from radical environmentalism, which advanced a critique of it based on its perceived anthropocentrism. Mainstream environmentalism favors humans over other forms of life, and concerns itself with reforms, seeing environmental issues as mechanical or technical problems. This belief in progress, modernity, rationality, empiricism and the role of the state can create the impression that science will be enough to solve the crisis. Radical environmentalism is not concerned with reform, but with developing a deeper understanding of biological, social and cultural aspects of environmental issues. Bioregionalism is a part of this critique, as it is more grass-roots than mainstream environmentalism, and involves a more diverse mix of peoples and approaches. This thesis looks at place-based environmental solutions, in particular bioregional ideas in the Pacific Northwest, the bioregion known as “Cascadia.” (See appendix.) This bioregion is named after the Cascade Mountains, a volcanic range that stretches from the south of British Columbia down to northern California. Its rivers run from the Continental Divide in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west.

⁹ Richard Nixon, *Richard Nixon: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President : 1970* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971). 8-16.

¹⁰ John A. Smith Agnew, Jonathan M., *American Space/American Place : Geographies of the Contemporary United States* (New York: Routledge, 2002). 41.

In chapter two, I will consider how the bioregional imagination contests environmental debate and practice. Chapter three addresses the question of whether the Pacific Northwest has been a good seedbed for bioregionalism and reinhabitation, wherein a sense of place creates less environmental exploitation and degradation. Chapter four deals with both the utopian and pragmatic sides of bioregionalism, and analyzes the book *Ecotopia* as an example of a “practical utopia.” Chapter five asks how culture may be understood as imaginative space parallel to the real space through a phenomenological perspective. Chapter six aims to show how certain people in Cascadia are trying to develop a sense of place through reinhabiting the bioregion through art.

1.1 The Science of Ecology

Ecology was an emerging concept in the 1950s. The brothers Eugene and Howard Odum wrote the book *Fundamentals of Ecology* (1953), which helped bring the idea of ecosystems to the general public. The theories behind ecology and ecosystems were based on nature as self-stabilizing, and these organizing principles of nature were utilized in a wave of communes and experimental living communities in the late 60s and early 70s, emphasizing harmony, order, and lack of hierarchy. The principle of the interconnectedness of all life and the intrinsic value of nature are central ideas within ecology – the science of the relations between organisms and their environments. From ecology we can infer that environmental problems are not mechanical or technical problems; they are philosophical, social and cultural problems created by humans through the nature/culture dichotomy. In the West, culture and nature are seen as separate. This is a false dichotomy that the humanities and social sciences need to help break down. If culture is part of nature, then the humanities have a central role in addressing environmental questions. The environmental humanities are valuable because we need to explore new ways of thinking about what constitutes as essential environmental knowledge.

Deep ecologists¹¹ see nature as stable and orderly, an equilibrium of harmony. The Odum brothers suggested humans should limit their interference with nature. This view can be interpreted as an argument that the planet is best left to itself. Today ecologists say everything is indeed interconnected, but through total chaos and destruction: nature is not harmonious and never reaches the state of stability that deep ecologists await. Environmental

¹¹ Deep ecology is defined in chapter 2.3.

historian Douglas R. Weiner describes how through an environmental history perspective, we come to realize something ecologists miss, namely that “the environment is what and where we variously want it to be.”¹² How we define environment and environmental problems is highly political; the human-nature relationship is a “moving target.” Weiner argues that the apparatus we use, and the objects we study when we study environmental history, are social actors always “armed with their own socially constructed cognitive maps.”¹³

Bioregionalism and reinhabitation are dimensions of a radical environmentalism useful in reworking attitudes toward progress. Central to bioregional thought is the idea that modernity created a spiritual crisis in which humanity has lost touch with “place” and therefore nature. Bioregionalism proposes to help deal with this adversity and overcome the nature/culture dichotomy through including culture as part of nature and thinking about place within ecological boundaries, before we think about legal ones. “Reinhabitation” - a key term in bioregional discourse – suggests a commitment to place, where the commitment to live in place will create a better society, overcoming past exploitation of and alienation from the land. Reinhabitation starts with assessing a problem, then comes up with local solutions shaped for the specific place, making it is inherently pragmatic. Ecologist and forester Aldo Leopold famously proposed a new “land ethic” based on notions concerning ecology in his environmental classic *A Sand County Almanac*, first published in 1949: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”¹⁴ For Leopold the biotic community includes every living thing, from the soil to animals and humans, and ethics is part of the evolutionary process: it is social evolution. He is trying to naturalize ethics as part of a logical science, in addition to carving out a space for ecology in the humanities. The prominent ecocritic and leading theorist Lawrence Buell suggests that the ecocentric ideas of *A Sand County Almanac* should not be taken literally, but read as a provocation. Buell argues that Leopold is trying to awaken the reader, not create a workable ethical position.¹⁵ Taken literally or not, these notions continue to influence bioregionalism. Moreover, Leopold argues that we can only behave ethically towards something or someone that we can see or feel, an argument essential to the “ethics of

¹² Douglas R. Weiner, "A Death-Defying Attempt to Articulate a Coherent Definition of Environmental History," *Environmental History* 10, no. 3 (2005). 405-408.

¹³ *Ibid.* 405-408.

¹⁴ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). 224.

¹⁵ Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005). 105.

locality.”¹⁶ Hands-on experience and proximity to the land appear to be very important to Leopold’s argument here.

Bio- or ecocentrism involve an ecophilosophical idea in which all living things are part of a web where no species should override the interest of the network. Ecocentrism is the antithesis to human-centered anthropocentrism, which prioritizes human interests and does not see ecocentrism as possible. This marks a crucial distinction of ideas within environmental ethics. However, not everyone agrees that the distinction between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism is useful for understanding environmental problems. Environmental historian Ramachandra Guha writes that we should rather blame overconsumption and militarization because “invoking the bogey of anthropocentrism is at best irrelevant, and at worst a dangerous obfuscation.”¹⁷ Regardless of what is to blame, the distinction between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism is crucial understanding radical environmentalism and for being able to situate bioregionalism. Ecocentrism or biocentrism, which has to do with the science of ecology and deep ecology, sees mankind as part of the natural world, and not as “Man,” therefore it does not see humans as superior to other species. Aldo Leopold’s land ethic or the evolutionary ideas of Darwin are examples of ecocentrism. The “father of the national parks” and founder of the Sierra Club in 1892, Scottish-born John Muir, asked, “Why should man value himself as more than a small part of the one great unit of creation?”¹⁸ Anthropocentrism, of which mainstream environmentalism is sometimes accused, is the tendency to consider human beings as the most significant entity in the universe, and see the natural world as a cornucopia of resources for humans to enjoy and control. For deep ecologists this is considered the hubris of mankind. Social ecologists see hierarchy as the root cause of environmental problems. Both deep ecologists and social ecologists agree that these assumptions are leading us off track. This thesis takes neither a “deep ecologist” nor a “social ecologist” stance, but instead looks at how imaginative spaces might create a sense of place necessary to tackle environmental problems.

1.2 Bioregionalism and Reinhabitation

Bioregionalism is a place-based idea that suggests that local, ecologically informed

¹⁶ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*

¹⁷ Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique" in *Philosophical Dialogues: Arne Næss and the Progress of Ecophilosophy* ed. Andrew Brennan, Nina Witoszek, and Arne Næss (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999). 316.

¹⁸ John Muir, *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1998). 139.

knowledge will create less exploitation and damage. Reorganizing politics by recognizing ecosystems over legal boundaries, bioregionalism believes societies can make smarter choices that benefit the natural world. Bioregionalism as a movement wants to reorganize and decentralize the United States into ecologically sustainable regions. Bioregionalism is not saying: How can we change others to be more like us and improve as environmentalists? It is asking questions such as: What can I do as an individual at my local, communal level? How can I be more in touch with the place I live right now? Unfortunately, environmentalism has an image problem heavily associated with guilt, and environmentalists cannot expect people to make choices that feel like sacrifices. One of the main suggestions in this thesis is that environmental thought needs to cater to a wider public than it does at present, and therefore this thesis proposes that environmentalism can benefit from associations with lifestyle, well-being, healing, fulfillment, or what is sometimes referred to as the “good life.” This is the first key to why bioregionalism is a useful critique of “mainstream environmentalism.” You cannot tell people to change their values, but you can demonstrate values such as sustainability and an environmental ethic through actions that stem from a change in mindset about economic growth imperatives or about what constitutes a “good life.” Bioregional thought can challenge the notion of progress because it tells a different story of what a good life can be. If we can start thinking bioregionally when it comes to our cities, it can be a strategy for a large number of people to relate differently to the natural environment.

In his essay “Critical Utopianism and Bioregional Ecocriticism,” David Landis Barnhill sums up the two aspects of bioregionalism that this thesis attempts to cover.

It has on one hand a pragmatic and reformist aspect of micro-level work being done now on the ground (such as farmers (sic) markets or cohousing), and on the other a radical, transformist, and utopian aspect, imagining and working toward an ideal society in harmony with the community of life.¹⁹

The term “bioregionalism” itself was coined in the 1970s, but the discourse of linking place-attachment with virtue, especially through farming, can be traced back to Roman pastoral poet Virgil’s books *The Georgics* (29 BC), and later Enlightenment rationalism, pastoral Jeffersonianism and the agrarian visions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

¹⁹ David Landis Barnhill, “Critical Utopianism and Bioregional Ecocriticism,” in *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place*, ed. Tom Lynch, Cheryll Glotfelty, and Karla Armbruster (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2012). 212-213.

“Cultivators of the earth are the most virtuous and independent citizens,”²⁰ wrote Thomas Jefferson in 1787. During the period of American Romanticism, transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau inspired reform movements, cooperative colonies, and communal farms like Brook Farm, Fruitlands, and others. In *Walden* (1857), perhaps the most influential book ever written on environmental thought, Thoreau makes the following comment on the unstoppable rain: “If it should continue so long as to cause the seeds to rot in the ground and destroy the potatoes in the low lands, it would still be good for the grass on the uplands, and, being good for the grass, it would be good for me.”²¹ Reading this quote as an example of early bioregional thought reveals an ecological sensibility long before the science of ecology. In saying that the rain will not merely be good for the grass – it will be good for “me” – it goes beyond ecocentrism. These notions were not exclusive to the American transcendentalists. Norwegian author Knut Hamsun explained his move from the city of Larvik to the historic farm of Nørholm by noting: “I don’t improve without agriculture.”²² This quote implies something similar to Thoreau’s comment on the rain, but does not say anything with regards to what is good for the land. These quotes exemplify different traditions which nonetheless Yi-Fu Tuan manages to express as “the human love of place or topophilia.”²³

The tradition that includes the bucolic; Virgil’s *Georgic*; the pastoral; Leo Marx’s “middle landscape,”; the agrarian visions; Jeffersonian republicanism; and the idealization of the yeoman farmer, praises the rural idyll of the countryside between the city and the wilderness. These are anthropocentric ideas with the human being in the center. The anti-modernist, wilderness preservation movement – the ecological ideal – is another tradition, which is not a continuation of the abovementioned agrarian ideals, according to Tuan, but rather “antithetical.”²⁴ As early as 1974, Tuan expressed the irony of preserving the wilderness in his book *Topophilia*. To Tuan, wilderness is not a place but a state of mind. His term topophilia, “the affective bond between people and place or setting,”²⁵ is of central importance to bioregionalism, because it proposes the love of all places, not just wilderness,

²⁰ Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). 165.

²¹ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings* 202.

²² Sissel Falck, *Knut Hamsuns Brev 1915-1924* vol. 4(Oslo: Gyldendal, 1997). 205.

²³ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1974). 92.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 112.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 4.

and because it stresses “awareness of the past.”²⁶ According to Tuan, both these traditions “permeate American culture.”²⁷ This thesis aims to show that both traditions influence bioregionalist thought.

Wilderness is a key concept of environmental humanities, and everything depends on this principal term. In using the term “wilderness,” the perception of nature has usually been of it being unspoiled, pristine, and uninhabited. In wilderness, nature is the opposite of culture, and the place of the other. The wilderness tradition has been challenged, most famously in William Cronon’s influential essay, “The Trouble with Wilderness.” Cronon argues that the wilderness is mankind’s creation which reproduce the dualistic vision of humanity and nature. Cronon picks apart the myths surrounding it and argue there is no unspoiled nature any longer; wilderness is a human construct “entirely a creation of the culture that holds it dear.”²⁸ Before Cronon, a major change for the meaning of the term wilderness came with Romanticism, when wilderness went from being a place of terror and beasts, to Eden itself, a place of treatment against the troubles of the modern world.²⁹

1.3 Chapter Outline

This thesis will consist of six main chapters. Chapter two outlines the differences between approaches and positions, and provides a brief overview of the theoretical literature of environmental discourses. It sets up a duality between mainstream environmentalism and radical environmentalism. This section will position bioregionalism within the history of the American green tradition. The chapter introduces “place” as a category in environmental thought, and brings up critiques of bioregionalism.

Chapter three discusses the environmental turn in American culture and argues that bioregional thought and practice have a strong presence, not just in the environmental imagination, but in real spaces such as the American West, or more specifically for this thesis, the Pacific Northwest. This chapter will examine representations of the West as “Eden” in late nineteenth century utopian communities of the Puget Sound area, an inlet of the Pacific Ocean in the state of Washington. This region is sometimes referred to as an “Ecotopia” in the media and in popular culture. Chapter three will briefly look into the environmental history of the

²⁶ Ibid. 99.

²⁷ Ibid. 109.

²⁸ William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*(New York: W.W. Norton, 1996). 79.

²⁹ Ibid. 72-81.

region, and point to historical and geographical factors that may underlie the influence of bioregionalism here. What changing cultural constructions of nature and environment led to the rise of bioregionalism in the Pacific Northwest? The chapter will furthermore deal with ideas of the West, such as American exceptionalism and the myth of the frontier as a “birth helper” of environmentalism. I will argue that the concept of “Cascadia” is an example of what historian Carlos A. Schwantes sees as “regional identity almost wholly linked to natural setting,”³⁰ and I will examine how Cascadia has upheld the image of an ecological region. Survival of ecological utopian thinking can be found in political and cultural expression and phenomena located in the American Pacific Northwest: I will draw a parallel between the imagined space of Cascadia and the real spaces of the Pacific Northwest. Radical thought can easily be dismissed as utopian, but this is not my mission here. References to the region as “Ecotopian” started after Ernest Callenbach’s bestseller *Ecotopia* was published in 1975. I will argue that the terms “Ecotopian” and “Cascadian” have influenced each other, and both have been used as new versions of “the promised land.”

Chapter four provides an introduction of utopian thought, arguing that while bioregionalism is part of utopian thinking, there is a pragmatic side to it. Environmental literary criticism studies the relationship between the physical environment and literature. Callenbach’s novel *Ecotopia* (1975) will be analyzed as an example of a bioregional utopia. Chapter four introduces and applies the slightly similar concepts of Tom Moylan’s “Critical Utopianism,” Kelvin J. Booth’s “Practical Utopia,” and Yi Fu Tuan’s term “Mythical space” to *Ecotopia*.

Chapters five and six treat “Cascadia” as a state of mind, showing its strength as a regional identity or an imaginative region of environmental consciousness. I will be analyzing the rhetoric of two cultural phenomenon – the documentary film *Occupied Cascadia* (2012) and the musical subgenre, Cascadian black metal. I will do a short analysis of the cultural expressions themselves, but focus mainly on the people, the subjects of the film and the music, and how they constitute the object, the place of Cascadia, through a phenomenological perspective. This is inspired by humanist geographers Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Casey, leading American phenomenologists of place. This thesis will aspire to understand place as a lived engagement, and show how people in Cascadia are trying to develop a sense of place

³⁰ Carlos A. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest : An Interpretive History*(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989). 368.

through reinhabiting the bioregion. I will look for this rhetoric, or tropes of Ecotopian Exceptionalism in the culture, and discuss some elements of this rhetoric in chapter five.

Chapters five and six will deal with what Kelvin J. Booth suggests as “seeing one’s identity in terms of membership in a biotic community.”³¹ These chapters will also look at how culture is created, based on bioregional values and identification with a certain biotic community. These two last chapters aim to show how the people of Cascadia express concern for the environment. According to bioregionalist author Doug Aberly, bioregionalism is best understood when viewed from the “inside” – not from reading texts. Gatherings should be attended, ephemeral periodicals reviewed, restoration projects participated in, and place-based rituals and ceremonies shared.³² I have not been attending any bioregional “rituals” or “ceremonies” for the purpose of this thesis. Yet looking at how these representatives of bioregional thinking in Cascadia constitute place through the media of film and written interviews, allows me to investigate how people constitute place.

As for the art forms, the film and the music, the format is not the main topic of interest here, but rather the ideas that are presented. Still, it is crucial that bioregionalism takes on these cultural forms. Myth-making, storytelling, and the human imaginative power have created the bioregion of Cascadia, among others. Bioregionalism is dual in this way – it is both a cultural construct and a concept built on physical and biological boundaries, and the memories and history of a place. We can create bioregions through imagining them in art, and art can broaden the bioregional imagination.³³ What is the environmental, ecological, or bioregional imagination then? Bioregions are real, because watersheds and mountains are real. Lawrence Buell explains this duality as “a myth of mutual constructionism (both natural and human-built) shaping in some measure the cultures that in some measure continually refashion it.”³⁴ Buell has suggested that “The environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination.”³⁵ What Buell means is that a lack of vision, or stories that challenge contemporary society and thought, make it more difficult to imagine and bring up ideas about

³¹ Kelvin J. Booth, "Environmental Pragmatism and Bioregionalism," in *Pragmatism and Environmentalism*, ed. Hugh P. McDonald (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2012). 75.

³² Doug Aberly, "Interpreting Bioregionalism - a Story from Many Voices," ed. Michael Vincent McGinnis, *Bioregionalism* (Taylor & Francis e-Library: Routledge, 2005). 32.

³³ Clearly, art can also simply be art and need not have a specific function or outcome in addition to the aesthetic function of the work, as known from art theory as formalism, but also as opposite as art dealing with utopian theory in literature, painting, and sculpture.

³⁴ Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World : Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. And Beyond* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001). 6.

³⁵ *The Environmental Imagination : Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995). 2.

another kind of world. This premise is connected to the assumption of this thesis, that in order to come up with better solutions for the environment, we need to be able to imagine and inspire great things. Such great things encompass art, and develop a bioregional imagination through art. I will argue that people interviewed in the film, and the bands interviewed in chapter six, agree on the basic bioregional principle of reinhabitation, that attaching meaning to place can create the idea that humans and the natural world can be “healed” spiritually or literally through reinhabitation, overcoming past exploitation of and alienation from the land. Chapter six will explore to what degree, in author David Ingram’s words, “music is a form of utopian expression that prefigures a better society in the future, including a healed relationship between human beings and the natural world.”³⁶ My argument suggests that music is a vital part of Cascadian bioregional identity. It can serve as an inspiration for environmental consciousness as well as an appreciation of the natural world of the Pacific Northwest. It is part of what makes up this imaginary place and can help forge its identity. Chapter six will furthermore attempt to answer some of the critiques raised in chapter two, such as the possible hazards of eco-fascism and territorial exclusiveness.

1.4 Primary Sources

I will use a mixed media approach with different types of sources: a film, a novel, music, images, and interviews on online blogs. The novel *Ecotopia* (1975) by Callenbach will be analyzed as an example of a bioregional utopia. The rhetoric of the documentary film *Occupied Cascadia* (2012) will be treated as a contribution to the environmental debate of “place” in environmental discourse. The content of online interviews with Cascadian black metal bands will be analyzed as ways to constitute Cascadian bioregional identity.

My sources are interviews from online magazines, as well as a manifesto that one band has written and published online. My interpretation of the texts will be a mix of textual analysis and cultural critique, where I try to place them in the context of bioregionalism and reinhabitation. I am aware of the strengths and limitations the interviews and manifesto present as cultural texts, in how questions are framed, and to whom they are posed, and how the answers might have been edited to fit the questions.

³⁶ David Ingram, *The Jukebox in the Garden : Ecocriticism and American Popular Music since 1960*(Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010). 15.

2 Environmentalism and Bioregionalism

2.1 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to lay out different theories within environmentalism, position bioregionalism within the environmental movement, and trace its ideas within the tradition of Nature Writing in America. I will discuss bioregionalism as a response to mainstream non-place-based environmentalism. Radical environmentalism critiques the loss of local and regional thought, and its replacement by the mainstream non-place-based environmental discourse. Essential to bioregional thought is the concept of place as a phenomenological experience. I will discuss how helpful place is as a concept for framing debates within the field of environmental humanities. If bioregionalism's claim that what is good for the land is good for the individual is true, place must still be a key concept in environmentalism. This chapter will raise critiques of place-based thinking, such as Ursula Heise's critique of bioregionalism. Heise argues that bioregionalism over-emphasizes the benefits of place-attachment when it comes to environmentalism. She sees place-based thinking as inadequate for today's global environmental emergency. I will further present some critiques of bioregionalism's possible outcomes, such as territorial exclusiveness and notions of the city as "bad" and the countryside as "good."

2.2 Mainstream Environmentalism

In 2004, environmental consultants Schellenberger and Nordhaus conducted interviews with 25 leaders in the American mainstream environmental movement and published a controversial essay called "The Death of Environmentalism." Their message read that environmentalists needed to rethink what they meant when saying the word "environment." What is this "thing" the environment that we need to protect, asked Schellenberger and Nordhaus? They argued that the environmental movement's idea of the "environment" should rest upon the notion that the environment is part of everyday life, something that humans are a part of. They also made the point that it is counterproductive to keep looking for one root cause of environmental degradation, a dominant concern of environmental debate in the 1980s and '90s. As soon as you decide on a root cause, say Schellenberger and Nordhaus,

observers stop looking for other causes or chains of causes. Another problem they found was how environmentalists frame solutions. In talking about an ecological apocalypse, the environmental movement fails “to inspire a compelling vision.”³⁷ At the same time, environmentalists’ emphasis on “short-term policy work, not long-term strategies”³⁸ is a key problem, because this focus reduces environmentalism to special interests. Both before and after this essay, radical environmentalists consisting of deep ecologists, social ecologists, the environmental justice movement, eco-feminists, pragmatists and bioregionalists, have remarked that mainstream environmentalists are not able to see environmental problems as social and cultural problems. So what is mainstream environmentalism in the United States? The following quote by Dr. Giovanna Di Chiro, from her essay in the ecocritical essay-collection *Uncommon Ground*, sums up one version. Di Chiro emphasizes the same separation which Schellenberger and Nordhaus bring up.

I am using the term “mainstream” in the sense of the commonly understood meanings and social organizations that constitute environmentalism in the United States. This would include ideas that embrace nature as threatened wilderness separate from polluted, overpopulated cities and the preservation of wild animal species and the nonhuman world in general. “Mainstream” also refers to organizations that invoke a historical legacy that includes the writings and philosophies of figures like John Muir, Aldo Leopold and Gifford Pinchot. Such organizations include the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Nature Conservancy.³⁹

Naomi Klein has commented that green groups in the United States and Canada are in a deep denial about how their partnerships with corporations leaves the groups’ hands tied. “It’s not every green group. It’s not Greenpeace, it’s not Friends of the Earth, it’s not, for the most part, the Sierra Club. It’s not 350.org, because it didn’t even exist yet,”⁴⁰ said Klein in 2013 to the online news source Salon.com. Klein’s critique is targeted at the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Defense Fund in their handling of the emission trade

³⁷ Michael and Ted Nordhaus Schellenberger, "The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World " (2004). 23.

³⁸ Ibid. 25.

³⁹ Giovanna Di Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in *Uncommon Ground*, ed. William Cronon(New York: W.W. Norton, 1996). 528.

⁴⁰ Jason Mark, "Naomi Klein: Green Groups May Be More Damaging Than Climate Change Deniers " Salon Media Group, http://www.salon.com/2013/09/05/naomi_klein_big_green_groups_are_crippling_the_environmental_movement_partner/.

system cap-and-trade, as well as their captivation with the idea of ecosystem services to mention two areas of partnership.

Radical environmentalists have criticized reform environmentalism for representing an anthropocentric, instrumental view of nature, in which humans have an intrinsic entitlement to other species. The movement has also been criticized for bedding with capitalists, technocratic, and focused on scientific progress.

2.3 Radical Environmentalism: Deep Ecology and Social Ecology

The distinction between anthropocentric and ecocentric separates deep ecology from reform environmentalism. The latter tends to be more preoccupied with technology, and developing economic and international policy. Ecocentrists are more concerned with interdependence between species and environmental ethics. Ecocentrists see anthropocentrism as the root cause of environmental degradation. According to Jeffrey C. Ellis' article "On the Search for a Root Cause," radical environmentalism has been more concerned with the search for a root cause than the reformers.

No sooner had this moderate, reform brand of environmentalism become institutionalized than more radical environmentalists, who believed that the American way of life and / or basic American values and attitudes were major contributing factors to the environmental crisis, began to criticize the advocates of reform for dealing with surface symptoms rather than with root causes.⁴¹

The term "deep ecology" was coined in the 1973 article "The Shallow and the Deep" by Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss. Deep Ecology is ecocentric or biocentric and partly inspired by the American tradition of an anti-modernist wilderness movement. Deep ecologists see human beings and our disposition to exploit nature as the problem. Deep ecologists also see the rapid increase in human population and our use of technology as crucial to environmental degradation. Deep Ecology has been critiqued for being anti-humanist, socially reactionary, misanthropic, mystical, inaccessible, and a retreat from real life.

⁴¹ Jeffrey C. Ellis, "On the Search for a Root Cause," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996). 263.

Social ecology, another form of radical environmentalism, understands unlimited economic growth as an obstacle to environmentalism, and believes in direct democracy. Social ecologists have critiqued deep ecologists for ignoring capitalism, class, society, and social structures, in their diagnosis of what has caused the environmental crisis.⁴² Political scientist Robyn Eckersley considers social ecology and deep ecology as eco-anarchist, explaining how they both seek to get rid of the state and work for local economic independence and decentralization. Both theories oppose human domination over the nonhuman world because their politics are grounded in ecology.⁴³ Social ecologist and historian Murray Bookchin, founder of the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont, sees environmental degradation as caused by not only a instrumental view of nature, but by systems of social hierarchy. Eckersley sees this view as a reversal of Marxism, where “it is the increasing human mastery of nature that has given rise to class society and social domination.”⁴⁴

This thesis argues that bioregionalism is, like deep ecology, ecocentric in its nature, but manages to incorporate some of the concerns of both deep ecologists and social ecologists, in addition to integrating some of the more pragmatic sides of mainstream environmentalism. Bioregionalism does not fall into the trap of essentializing environmental problems, because it does not point to one root cause as the reason behind the exploitation. Instead of looking for a root cause, bioregionalism are looking for complex and pluralist solutions to the environmental crisis.

2.4 Bioregionalism.

A bioregional grassroots movement developed in the 1960s and '70s in western North America, and advocated for a reorganization of nations into bioregions, whereby ecosystems and natural boundaries replaced legal boundaries. It was a way of overcoming the limits of the nation state, by thinking on a smaller scale. Bioregionalism takes into account the natural world, climate, available resources, local culture, and history. Bioregionalism favors local, grass-roots, anarchistic, or decentralized efforts over national scientific management and technocratic experts, combining agrarianism with radical environmentalism. This thesis sees

⁴² Peter A. Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).154.

⁴³ Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory : Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (London: UCL Press, 1992). 145.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 149.

bioregionalism as a useful way of reframing questions about the environment and of deepening local democracy. According to Lynch, Glotfelty, and Armbruster, the term bioregionalism is not widely known, but ideas such as “community, sustainability, local culture, local food system, ‘green’ cities, renewable energy, habitat restoration, ecological awareness, grassroots activism” are broadly adopted “due to the efforts and example of bioregionalists.”⁴⁵ Peter Berg, and Raymond Dasmann of the educational and organizing bioregional group, Planet Drum Foundation; Scott Russell Sanders, Gary Snyder, and Wendell Berry, are some of early bioregionalism’s main thinkers. Definitions of bioregionalism vary; I will be using the term in a broad sense that has to do with regional dedication to place, based on ecology, self-identification, and a common ground. Robert L. Thayer Jr. defines bioregions in his book *LifePlace* (2003).

A *bioregion* is literally and etymologically a “life-place” —a unique region definable by natural (rather than political) boundaries with a geographic, climatic, hydrological, and ecological character capable of supporting unique human and nonhuman living communities. Bioregions can be variously defined by the geography of watersheds, similar plant and animal ecosystems, and related, identifiable landforms (e.g., particular mountain ranges, prairies, or coastal zones) and by the unique human cultures that grow from natural limits and potentials of the region. Most importantly, the bioregion is emerging as the most logical locus and scale for a sustainable, regenerative community to take root and to *take place*.⁴⁶

Bioregionalism wants us to reimagine and reinhabit the land mentally and physically by reassessing where we are. It suggests eco-regions as a useful level for change. Ecocritic Greg Garrard proposes three potentials or features of bioregionalism. These include undermining the false dualism between city and countryside, by showing they are mutually dependent. Garrard holds up that bioregionalism is pragmatic because it favors action on the ground, on a local level. Bioregionalism is, according to Garrard, “a politics of ‘reinhabitation’ that encourages people to explore more deeply the natural and cultural landscape in which they already live.”⁴⁷ If you are a bioregionalist, your strategy is “reinhabiting”. Lynch, Glotfelty, and Armbruster agree that reinhabitation is one of three central terms in the discourse of

⁴⁵ Tom Lynch, Cheryll Glotfelty, and Karla Armbruster, *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2012). 4.

⁴⁶ Robert L. Thayer, *Lifeplace: Bioregional Thought and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). 3.

⁴⁷ Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2012). 127-128.

bioregionalism, the other ones being dwelling and sustainability.⁴⁸ Reinhabitation suggests that a commitment to place can help overcome past exploitation of and estrangement from the land, as suggested by Berg and Dasmann's definition of reinhabitation from their 1977 article, "Reinhabiting California."

Reinhabitation means learning to live-in-place in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation. It involves becoming native to a place through becoming aware of the particular ecological relationships that operate within and around it. It means undertaking activities and evolving social behavior that will enrich the life of that place, restore its life-supporting systems, and establish an ecologically and socially sustainable pattern of existence within it. Simply stated it involves becoming fully alive in and with a place. It involves applying for membership in a biotic community and ceasing to be its exploiter.⁴⁹

The concept of reinhabitation can be read as a continuation of Aldo Leopold's new land ethic, the ethical principles of nature-human relations to live by, based on the recovery of the ecology concept in the 1960s. Leopold wrote, "in short, a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it."⁵⁰ One of bioregionalism's most influential writers is one of the West Coast's most published poets, Pulitzer Prize winner and essayist Gary Snyder. He echoes the ecology of Aldo Leopold in this quote from *The Practice of the Wild* (1990): "To know the spirit of a place is to realize that you are a part of a part and that the whole is made of parts, each of which is whole. You start with the parts you are whole in."⁵¹ Ecocritic Patrick Murphy affirms something similar to a land ethic or sense of place in his essay, "Grounding Anotherness and Answerability." He proposes an environmental ethic that requires "answerability" to what extends beyond humans.⁵² Murphy argues that there is a re-emergence of networks and groups who work along bioregional lines, and that the solidarity and identification with place that these groups have is grounded in a "sense of answerability and a sense of anotherness."⁵³ Murphy sees the nation state as problematic for environmentalism, and highlights bioregionalism as the best direction for the radical rearrangement of state power. The problem of transnational

⁴⁸ Lynch, Glotfelty, and Armbruster, *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place* 4.

⁴⁹ Peter Berg, and Raymond Dasmann, "Reinhabiting California," *The Ecologist* 7, no. 10 (1977). 399.

⁵⁰ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There* 203-204.

⁵¹ Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild: Essays* (New York: North Point, 1990). 38.

⁵² Patrick Murphy, "Grounding Anotherness and Answerability," in *Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies: Transatlantic Conversations on Ecocriticism*, ed. Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006). 419.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 424.

corporations is that they become irresponsible because they lack a connection to a place. Environmental problems cross political borders. Therefore, we need to operate both transnationally and locally, to deal with environmental issues such as global warming. Murphy launches the concept of territorial solidarity, which means having solidarity at the transnational as well as the local level.⁵⁴

2.5 Place Theory and Phenomenology

American culture studies has long been concerned with studies of place: American culture has rested upon its relationship to nature. An early example of this is Crèvecoeur's 1782 essay, "Letters from an American Farmer," which depicted Americans as sons of the soil. Later, Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land* (1950) and Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) made clear the importance of landscape and its influence on American civilization. "Space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value,"⁵⁵ writes Human Geography pioneer Yi-Fu Tuan. He argues that the concepts of space and place depend upon each other. Tuan's writing can make the reader want to know how to be more in touch with the place I live in right now. How can this attachment improve both humans and the environment? Bioregionalists ask these questions and believe that the answer will be found in place, where the locality we are in will affect our actions. In developing a bioregional perspective or a sense of place, we can reimagine the places where we live, and our relationship to those places. This is based on Heidegger's phenomenological concept of placemaking as "dwelling" and a humanistic cultural geographical reading of place. Phenomenologist and philosopher Edward Casey wrote, "To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the place one is in."⁵⁶ This is a bottom-up idea that is central to bioregionalism: if you develop a caring relationship to your home base through a knowledge-based place-attachment, this will spill over onto other dimensions – and in the end will be better for the environment. Casey argues how place is the first of all things, prior to space, and uses Heidegger and Bachelard to back this up. "Both Archytas and Aristotle proclaimed that place is prior to space, and, more recently, Bachelard and Heidegger have re-embraced this conviction, also known as the Archytian Axiom."⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid. 424.

⁵⁵ Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* 6.

⁵⁶ Edward S. Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place," in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (1996: 1993). 18.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 17.

The emphasis on the importance of place-attachment at the bioregional level is a contested view among leading academics and ecocritics. Ursula Heise (Stanford) asks if this excessive emphasis on localism is really necessary and useful as a strategy in environmentalism. Ecocritic Greg Garrard (Bath Spa University) holds that bioregionalism is indeed useful, but that it must not be seen as a remedy for all environmental ills or difficulties. He writes that “Bioregionalism may well represent a positive influence in the ecocritical search for a culture of dwelling, or a viable modern georgic, but it is not a panacea.”⁵⁸ Lawrence Buell (Harvard) argues that bioregionalism “aims to avoid the extremes of hard-shell localism and the free-floating sentimentalism of fancying one is in tune with ‘nature’ or ‘Gaia.’”⁵⁹

Post-nationalism, regionalism, bioregionalism, localism, or globalism? Bioregionalism is part of a crowded field of competing concepts, but which is ideal for initiating positive environmental change? Geographer Doreen Massey suggests rethinking our assumptions about space. She argues that space is relational, multifaceted and contested.⁶⁰ Place needs to be seen as a movement and process, as an agent and not as a static container or backdrop; place is indisputably an agent in bioregionalism. Place is relational, something that can be contested. Not everyone sees the Pacific Northwest as Ecotopia or Cascadia. However, this thesis concerns those who do. Lawrence Buell says that Edward S. Casey in his *The Fate of Place* (1997) “argues convincingly that theories of embodied, platially contexted knowing have rebounded from their discreditation by Enlightenment rationalism.”⁶¹ Buell argues convincingly that this is proven by the existence of grass-roots initiatives, and that “place has clearly survived its discreditation as a theoretical category, as the plethora of locally based environmental resistance movements shows.”⁶² According to Bruce Evan Goldstein, Geographer David Harvey has critiqued bioregionalism's sense of place for being a defensive way to tackle the negative implications of globalization.⁶³

Bioregionalism can incorporate spatial theory: places are socially produced but also inherit real, tangible qualities. Bioregionalism sometimes suggests transcendental or spiritual ties to place. The critique of modernity that Tuan proposes in his discussion about topophilia

⁵⁸ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. 127.

⁵⁹ Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* 83.

⁶⁰ Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," in *Reading Human Geography*, ed. T. and Gregory Barnes, D.(London:Arnold: 1997).

⁶¹ Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World : Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. And Beyond*. 290.

⁶² *Ibid.* 57.

⁶³ Bruce Evan Goldstein, "Combining Science and Place- Based Knowledge: Pragmatic and Visionary Approaches to Bioregional Understanding," in *Bioregionalism*, ed. Michael Vincent McGinnis(London: Routledge, 1999). 158.

– the human love of place – has to do with scale: How can your love for place be stretched to encompass the whole world? Can we be globalized topophiles loving each speck of dust on this planet? This bond to a place that results in topophilia comes from knowledge and experience of the place. Hans Jonas and Zygmunt Bauman call it the “ethic of proximity.”⁶⁴ This echoes Aldo Leopold’s ethic of locality, which argues we can only behave ethically towards that which we can see or feel.⁶⁵ “Local knowledge,” says Casey, “comes down to an intimate understanding of what is generally true in the locally obvious; it concerns what is true about place in general as manifested in this place.”⁶⁶ In *Topophilia* (1974), Tuan suggests, “in some ideal future, our loyalty will be given only to the home region of intimate memories and, at the other end of the scale, to the whole earth.”⁶⁷ Ecocritic Patrick Murphy’s concept of territorial solidarity - solidarity on transnational levels as well as local levels – is a continuation of Tuan’s idea.⁶⁸ Is this not a paradox? How can we feel loyalty to the whole earth but not the nation state? Both Tuan’s and Murphy’s suggestions are highly optimistic on behalf of human beings. Tuan’s thought is coming from a time when the idea of the “blue marble” and the analogy that we are all in the same boat was very strong. We are not in the same boat anymore. Some people are on cruise ships while others are sitting in boats that leak.

You cannot discuss place without bringing up questions of essentialism – the debate over whether place is identity affirming or socially constructed. Marxist, feminist, and post-structural geographers like David Harvey oppose the idea of landscape as character-shaper. Lawrence Buell concurs: “Devotees of place-attachment can easily fall into a sentimental environmental determinism.”⁶⁹ It is crucial that ecocritics and human geographers writing about place understand placemaking as both culturally and socially influenced, and that nature and culture are connected, says Buell.⁷⁰ This sounds to me like a key answer to the debate between place as socially and culturally produced and the critique from phenomenologists such as Casey for social constructivists’ lack of interest in the phenomenological experience of place.

⁶⁴ Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). 33.

⁶⁵ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*

⁶⁶ Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place." 45.

⁶⁷ Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* 102.

⁶⁸ Murphy, "Grounding Otherness and Answerability." 424.

⁶⁹ Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* 66.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 67.

Phenomenology sees place as something that is contested. Both Tuan and Relph were phenomenologists interested in locating notions of place in human geography.⁷¹ We can apply the same method: How would a phenomenology of bioregionalism look? Since reinhabitation involves developing a “sense of place,” people would need to develop knowledge and awareness of such things as where their water, food, and other goods come from. Lawrence Buell puts it this way in his book *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001): “What feels like a place to me may not feel so to you, and likewise with whole cultures. Place, then, is a configuration of highly flexible subjective, social, and material dimensions, not reducible to any of these.”⁷² This means place is a personal experience; it depends on what you do and who you are. A shopping mall can constitute a meaningful place of interaction for someone, and as a place of dread for someone else. Phenomenology talks about being-in-the-world, another term from Heidegger, meaning that we are rooted in the here and now. It is a philosophical position that emphasizes that knowledge comes from individual sense-based experience, not completely opposing Descartes’ dualism, but expanding it on behalf on the body’s presence in the world as the ground point of experience.

Ecocritic Greg Garrard writes that “Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology has encouraged ecocritics to highlight the sensuous pleasure of encounters with ‘the flesh of the world’, as distinct from the Puritan self-denial often wrongly associated with environmentalism.”⁷³ The French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, influenced by Heidegger, valued perception, and key concerns of phenomenology are imagination, memory, and perception. This is how phenomenology examines phenomena, and this is how cultural analysis is undertaken within this paradigm. It is why it is important to imagine things, because this is part of how we create knowledge. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright argue that “Phenomenology is most useful when used in conjunction with socio-historical and cultural analyses.”⁷⁴ Phenomenology deals with attachment, concern, and involvement. It is an interpretive study of the human experience, and in this case of place.

2.6 Heise and the Critique of Bioregionalism

⁷¹ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2004). 33.

⁷² Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World : Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. And Beyond*. 60.

⁷³ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. 36.

⁷⁴ Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). 136.

This section will look more closely at Ursula Heise's critique of bioregionalist thought. The idea of a "sense of place" or reinhabiting is that if you develop a close relationship to a place, you will be able to rise above the placelessness that plagues modern American life, to develop an ecological understanding, and consequently make better choices for the environment. This idea, which highlights grass-roots initiatives and decentralization, is a response to the environmental crisis and the alienation and mobility put in place by modernity. Heise argues in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008) that this concept of place has proven very resilient in environmental discourse, but must be replaced with a "deterritorialization," weakening the connection between culture and place, towards "eco-cosmopolitanism."⁷⁵ This chapter will not go into the concept of eco-cosmopolitanism in detail because it has no real function in this thesis, but will instead present Heise's critique of place as a concept in environmentalism. According to Heise, there exists an idea about the American national character and myth of placelessness. Heise says that the rhetoric of place or bioregional localism, has no real usefulness to environmental ethics or environmentalism, but it is an answer to the American myth, starting with the emphasis in Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* on American culture as restless and mobile. This mobility is, according to Heise, seen as an American "cultural deficiency," and this feeling of inadequacy is what gives "the insistence on a sense of place much of its persuasive power in environmentalist discourse today."⁷⁶ My question to Heise would be: How do you separate culture from the environmental discourse and history of a country? How do you separate place and a country's environmental movement? Clearly, ideas about the American national character and environmentalism are interrelated.

Another critique that Heise and social ecologists raise has to do with privilege. Is bioregionalism a privileged perspective? Becoming rooted in a place is undoubtedly a luxury, and would be far-fetched for the 200 million climate refugees we might see by 2050, numbers according to the influential Stern Review Report on the Economics of Climate Change from 2006. Heise points to the dominance of white, male, back-to-the-land environmentalists in place-based environmentalism. This was seen especially during the 1960s and '70s, when men like Wendell Berry, Gary Snyder, Peter Berger, Raymond Dasmann, and later Scott Russell Sanders and Kirkpatrick Sale were important for the bioregional movement. Heise discusses another important aspect, namely the individualist nature of these works, and points

⁷⁵ Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. 6-7.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 49.

to women and Native Americans as offering stories of more communal attempts of reinhabiting.⁷⁷ Heise sets up a dichotomy between white and non-white, male and female, rural and urban, and privileged and underprivileged. She presents a critique of what she calls “conventional environmentalist discourses of place”⁷⁸ for simplifying the leap from the local to the global, treating the local as a miniature version of the planet. What Heise does is set up contradictions between bioregionalists and environmental justice activists, bringing up the wilderness ideal of the conservation era and showing how it displaced native groups and poor farmers. As bioregionalism broadens out to include environmental justice and urban life, this assessment fades. Much of this critique is also a general critique of environmentalism in the 1960s and ’70s, not limited to the bioregionalist movement.

Heise sets up another dichotomy of how culture is shaped. Is it through the land as a bioregion as Snyder suggests, or is it through migration and the experience of many places? Why can it not be both? Clearly, Snyder is himself influenced by places such as Japan and China. Heise sees environmentalism as closed off from the ideas of cultural theory that present identity as shaped by “mixtures, fragments, and dispersed allegiances to diverse communities, cultures and places – or that precisely these mixtures might be crucial for constituting ‘identities’ politically as ‘subjects.’”⁷⁹ Heise offers a critique of Gary Snyder and what she sees as his assumption that identity is formed from a locale. Heise’s dichotomy of identity as only shaped either by place or “mixtures and fragments” seems unhelpful. Greg Garrard’s suggestion of not seeing bioregionalism as a panacea for all ills, or Booth’s reminder that it is not the principle mode for shaping an identity, is a premise of this thesis.

Environmental theorist Mitchell S. Thomashow has suggested “cosmopolitan bioregionalism”⁸⁰ as a strategy for developing bioregionalist thought. Moreover, this strategy deals with economy and favors local interest. Like phenomenologists, Thomashow stresses the sensory experience and the need to understand ecology through experience, differentiating it from Heise’s obsession with global culture. Heise argues that Thomashow’s approach is paradoxical: on the one hand he is pragmatic with his concept global cosmopolitanism, while on the other hand he values a spiritual relation to place as “the basis of ecologically aware practices.”⁸¹ Heise argues that the “local” is not possible to comprehend epistemologically,

⁷⁷ Ibid. 29.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 39.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 43.

⁸⁰ Mitchell Thomashow, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism," ed. Michael Vincent McGinnis, *Bioregionalism* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, Routledge, 2005). 122.

⁸¹ Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. 41.

and just as problematic politically as the nation state. She does not see this as a useful concept in ecocriticism or environmentalism.

Nonetheless, what Thomashow calls a cosmopolitan bioregionalism might be a way to overcome the binary opposition of bioregionalists versus eco-cosmopolitanists. When it comes to American culture, it just is not cosmopolitan. Most Americans do not own a passport and cheap fuel, which provides the freedom of movement that underlies cosmopolitanism, will not last forever.⁸² It seems that humans will only have had this freedom of movement for a very short moment in time before it ends. Our extensive international travelling is sponsored by cheap oil, and in the future energy costs will rise and we will have to sport our cosmopolitanism in other ways. Furthermore, it is questionable to what extent cosmopolitanism brings environmental awareness. It is very challenging for us to be thinking about the global consequences of our daily choices and feel empathy with those far away. We cannot presume that our neighbors should feel empathy with people on the other side of the planet, even though we can look them up on Google Earth and see people biking on the street on another continent. According to the “ethic of proximity” or Leopold’s “ethic of locality,” humans need to be spatially close and feel a relationship in order to develop knowledge and experience of a place.

2.7 Blood and Soil? Eco-Fascism, Xenophobia, and Territorial Exclusiveness

While eco-cosmopolitanism may be a contradiction in terms, the critique of drawing up borders to develop a sense of place can have unintended consequences that environmentalists need to consider. Attempts to carve out a space for oneself, and consciously put down roots, raises questions of exclusion.⁸³ Can bioregionalism become ethnocentric, or patriotic, or can it be used by such groups as national socialists to spread racism? Madeleine Hurd (Södertörn University) has performed studies on eco-nationalism and the “ecology” of the radical right in Germany, and the unity between parts of radical environmentalism and the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland (NPD). In her research she uses the term “territorial exclusiveness” when talking about emotional attachment to place. In German the word *Heimat*, meaning homeland, is closely connected to the term “blood and soil,” (Blut und

⁸² According to http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppi/stats/stats_890.html there was 113,431,943 valid U.S. passports in circulation in 2012

⁸³ Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. 47.

Boden) and Hurd shows how in Nazism and fascism this implies that place is linked to nation and race.⁸⁴ Hurd shows that this implication, that people derived from a place where they “naturally” belong, has been described in bioregional terms as creating an ecological niche where some people fit into a habitat more than others do: “This emotional linkage derives from a neo-Romantic ideology – reinforced by pseudo-scientific biological determinism – that hold peoples to be co-determined by their specific nature, language and history.”⁸⁵ The bioregionalist movement or bioregionalist thinkers need to show awareness of the similarities between environmental and national socialist rhetoric. According to environmental historian Ramachandra Guha, the rise of peasant environmentalism in Germany the 1920s occurred at the same time that the National Socialists gained power. He writes that there were similarities between the two groups, creating a bond between environmentalism and nationalism.⁸⁶ Hurd shows how bioregionalism can be a powerful paradigm that can easily be abused by the far right. It is crucial that race and nationality is left out of the question when talking about emotional attachment to place, such as Tuan’s phenomenology-influenced concept, topophilia. Tuan rejects empires and states as receivers of the human love of place, and thereby avoids any link between nation and place.⁸⁷ I will return briefly to discuss possible outcomes of this theme in chapter six.

2.8 Broadening Bioregionalism: The Role of the City

An additional critique of bioregionalism and its proponents is the critique of the outdated hierarchical naturalization of the countryside as “good,” and the city as “bad” and morally wrong. It appears to be a general agreement in today’s discourse of environmental humanities that a rural versus urban dichotomy is not seen as helpful and needs to be broken down. Jill Gatlan is an ecocritic who note the troubles with some of bioregionalist anti-urban thought and naturalization of the countryside. Jill Gatlin brings up a common critique of bioregional academic writing: the fact that it privileges “rural dwellers, wilderness backpackers, the leisured class, and the racially privileged.”⁸⁸ The critique of bioregionalism for neglecting

⁸⁴ Madeleine Hurd, "The Nation, the Volk, and the Heimat: Understanding Eco-Fascist Iconographies of Space and Nature (Appended)," in *NIES Annual Symposium, "Environmentalism, Spatiality and the Public Sphere"* (Oslo2012). 2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 2.

⁸⁶ Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism : A Global History*(New York: Longman, 2000). 18.

⁸⁷ Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* 101.

⁸⁸ Jill Gatlin, "'Los Campos Extraños De Esta Ciudad'/'the Strange Fields of This City': Urban Bioregionalist Identity and Environmental Justice in Lorna Dee Cervante's 'Freeway 280'," in *The Bioregional Imagination:*

urban landscapes is closely related to bioregionalism's agrarian roots, but the critique is sometimes misplaced, as some of the early bioregionalists like Peter Berg worked on a green city movement in San Francisco in the 1970s. Ecocritics like Gatlan are on an important errand to break down the opposition between ruralists and urbanists. Contemporary bioregionalism should follow suit. There seems to be a divide within bioregional ideas about the role of the city. There is undoubtedly an idealization of rural life in Wendell Berry's work, and sometimes in Gary Snyder's too. Gatlan discusses Sale and Snyder, and criticizes them for reproducing the opposition between city and countryside: "When it comes to the moral component of inhabitation, for example, both writers revert to valuing the countryside or wilderness over the city."⁸⁹

The health of the rural lifestyle has traditionally been juxtaposed with the ills of the city. Urban bioregionalists argue however, that you can reinhabit a city. In environmental psychology, much research is being done on the impacts of engagement with the urban landscape on public health, and in creating environmental ethics. Robert L. Ryan and Robert E. Grese have written about the emotional connections of volunteers working on urban restoration. Ryan and Grese claim that "Ecological restoration of degraded urban landscapes creates benefits for both people and the land,"⁹⁰ and that "there was something transformative about volunteering in ecological restoration projects."⁹¹ Bioregional writing needs to stop neglecting the city. Reinhabitation can happen anywhere, and every place is a home to be reinhabited. There is no reason urban spaces should be left out of the discussion.

2.9 Conclusion

American mainstream environmentalism has been critiqued for overlooking the human relationship with place. This chapter has presented different theories within environmentalist discourse, positioning bioregionalism as ecocentric, with some anthropocentric concerns. The chapter has raised critiques of place-based thinking, such as Ursula Heise's critique of place as in fact a tradition in American culture and not a theoretical category. I have shown how phenomenology can be used in locating notions of place in human geography. This raises

Literature, Ecology, and Place, ed. Glotfelty and Armbruster Lynch (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2012). 251.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 249.

⁹⁰ Robert L. and Grese Ryan, Robert E., "Urban Volunteers and the Environment: Forest and Prairie Restoration," in *Urban Place : Reconnecting with the Natural World*, ed. Peggy F. Barlett (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005). 181.

⁹¹ Ibid. 180.

concerns about the human imagination, memory, and perception. This chapter has shown how environmentalism can have unintended consequences. Bioregions must be open for everyone to reinhabit, in order to avoid the hazards of eco-fascism and territorial exclusiveness. Having presented ecocritical critiques of bioregional notions of the city as “bad,” and rural places as “good,” I conclude that bioregionalism today argues that every place is a home to be reinhabited. Reinhabitation can, for instance, take the form of restoring an urban park and its neighborhood. A return to place can be an answer to the environmentally deleterious effects of neoliberal globalization, which has triumphed over ecological concerns time and time again.

3 Bioregionalism and The Pacific Northwest

3.1 Introduction

As we have seen, bioregionalism raises questions about nature, space, and culture. This chapter will trace bioregional thought and practice, in particular geographic spaces such as the American West, and particularly the Pacific Northwest. I will explore the link between utopian colonies in the Pacific Northwest in the nineteenth century, and the growth of environmental and bioregional thought in environmental movements of the twentieth century as outcomes of agrarian and Romanticist ideas about nature. This chapter deals with the following question: Is the Pacific Northwest an especially fertile ground for bioregionalist thought? Since bioregionalism is both part of a historical and cultural space, and a geographical, biological, and therefore material space, this chapter will ground itself in the geography and history of the West, both as idea and as a region. Central to defining the region is both its environmental and social history, urban as well as rural. This chapter and the next one will introduce “Cascadia” as an ecological landscape, and explore the interrelated history of ecology and utopia. I will be discussing representations of the West as “Eden” in late nineteenth century utopian communities as an early example of this regional identity.

What is Cascadia? The name comes from Greek and means waterfall. Scottish naturalist David Douglas was the first to apply the name when he wrote about the “cascading” waterfalls in the 1820s.⁹² Common images and resources of the Pacific Northwest are salmon, rain, evergreen Douglas fir trees, and waterfalls. In my discussion, I will talk about Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. Many bioregionalists call this area Cascadia, and poet Gary Snyder calls it the Douglas fir bioregion. Advocates for secession or community independence have created the “Doug,” Cascadia’s blue, white and green flag with a Douglas fir tree in the middle. The nonprofit organization *Ecotrust* of Portland, Oregon calls this cross-border region “Salmon Nation.”⁹³ According to historian Carl Abbott, there have been many attempts to repackage Cascadia. Cascadia is the “the brainchild of Seattle University

⁹² Douglas Todd, *Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia : Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2008). 4.

⁹³ Carl Abbott, "Competing Cascadias: Imagining a Region over Four Decades " in *Society for American City and Regional Planning History*(Oakland, California 2010). 14.

sociologist David McCloskey, who began teaching a course on the ‘Sociology of Cascadia’ in 1978.”⁹⁴ I am writing about the largely urban western corridor, slashed by the Interstate 5 Highway, with medium to large sized cities, like Eugene, Salem, Portland, Olympia, Tacoma, Seattle, Bellingham, Victoria, and Vancouver. As typically defined, the region stretches from British Columbia in the north to Oregon in the south; it is connected by the artery of the Columbia River and split in two by the US-Canadian border. To the west is the Pacific Ocean, and to the east of the Cascades is the hinterland of the Pacific Northwest. Although the sources and texts I am using in this thesis all define Cascadia somewhat differently, sometimes including northern California, western Montana, and Idaho, my thesis limits the definition to Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, west of the Cascade mountains.

3.2 Western Landscapes and American Nationalism

Conceptions of nature change over time. The Pacific Northwest has a long reputation for being a wild and bountiful region, a promised land at the edge of the American continent. With the rise of environmentalism in the 1960s, ecological awareness has more clearly become part of the regional identity. Nevertheless, that the regional identity depends on nature’s abundance is nothing new. President Jefferson, who even envisioned parts of the West Coast as “the Republic of the Pacific,” assigned Lewis and Clark on an expedition to explore the western region in 1804.⁹⁵ Before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the Oregon Territory was full of natives, fur trappers, Spanish, French, and the British Empire, which was represented through the Hudson’s Bay Company. The European settlers transformed the landscape through their colonization of the continent, and brought with them disease, warfare, capitalism, new flora and fauna, and new farming methods. They brought new attitudes toward nature, such as seeing it as abundant and inexhaustible. This westward expansion in the 1800s brought certain understandings about the relationship between man and nature, and man and man. As white settlers steadily moved westward and drove natives out, it was assumed the settlers belonged there. As the historian Richard White puts it “. . . the first white man always enters an untouched paradise.”⁹⁶ A newspaper reporter was the first to come up with the term “Manifest Destiny,” a dominant image of this era. Americans saw their successful expansion as a sign that God was on the white man’s side. This feeling of having a

⁹⁴ Ibid. 11.

⁹⁵ Todd, *Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia : Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest* 2.

⁹⁶ Richard White, "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon(New York: W.W. Norton, 1996). 174.

special place in the West was increased by technological progress, like the railway and the telegraph – manifestations of technological progress that made it possible to populate the continent with Euro-Americans. The West became associated with hard work, opportunity, and self-reliance, but it is not hard to argue that the American West after 1880 came about largely because of federal subsidies, military industry, dam projects, irrigation projects, and the railroad. The question of this chapter is: Did bioregional ideas come to flourish in the Pacific Northwest? And if so, why? To answer this, I will look closer at the myths of man and nature.

Frederick Jackson Turner's influential essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893), developed the idea of the frontier to explain the American national character. The frontier was both a geographical concept and a cultural one. Whereas the wilderness is seen as empty, the settler and the farmer build democratic community. This went well with the Jeffersonian idealization of the yeoman farmer, the ideology of republicanism, and the agrarian vision. Founding father, philosopher, and politician Thomas Jefferson believed that life as a small-scale independent farmer was essential to the future of American democracy, that rural life working your own land based on rational, enlightenment ideas created better and more virtuous citizens, citizens who also followed their self-interest by moving westward. Virtue for Jefferson came from the hard work of the sons of the soil. As writer David Shi has it, Jefferson's agrarian vision became a Romantic one.

The romantic sensibility saw nature as the source of aesthetic pleasure, moral goodness, and spiritual inspiration. Jefferson, Crèvecoeur, Philip Freneau, William Bartram, and other eighteenth-century agrarians had foreshadowed such an attitude. For them, however, nature primarily represented earth to be worked and planted.⁹⁷

Before the nineteenth century, the idea of preservation of wilderness did not exist. A cultivated landscape meant it was friendly, while wild forests or steep mountains were a sign of something dangerous, disorderly, and forsaken by God.⁹⁸ Man's conception of nature changed with the romantic era and the rapid industrialization and urbanization of America. This marks a change from the Enlightenment's mechanical, Cartesian view of nature. Between 1780 and 1860, the number of people living in urban areas rose from 202,000 to

⁹⁷ David E. Shi, *The Simple Life : Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). 127.

⁹⁸ Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959). 3.

6,217,000.⁹⁹ With industrialization and urbanization, nature could be a “cure” by which the cultivators of the soil would fix the ills of the city. In the nineteenth century, nature was seen as beneficial to public health. Cities were dirty and living conditions were poor. By the mid-eighteen hundreds, the transcendentalist writers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau had written the classic works *Nature* (1836) and *Walden* (1857) respectively, and the Hudson River School artists had begun painting their Romantic landscapes, such as Thomas Cole’s *The Garden of Eden* (1827-28). While Europeans had their monuments, Americans could proudly show off their natural wonders, such as Yellowstone National Park, the first in the world established by an act of Congress in 1872. With the state increasingly present in the West, there was a shift in stewardship from the assumption that all lands should be privatized to arguing that much land should remain under federal control, an argument that paralleled the development of national ideals of scientific, centralized knowledge and rational management of nature. This utilitarian attitude includes putting nature to its highest use. President Theodore Roosevelt and the conservationist and forester Gifford Pinchot of the United States Forest Service represented a utilitarian view of nature.

Caring about nature’s own worth came later, with preservationists like John Muir, who believed wilderness lead to religious experiences. The idea of the West as a promised land and a reservoir of nature’s abundance have been preeminent in the expansion of the realm and to the myths of the national character. What is relevant about this story to my examination of the Pacific Northwest and bioregionalism is the fact that bioregionalism is an outcome of a combination of the agrarian way, in which nature’s worth is to be “worked and planted,” and the preservationist wilderness ideal of Sierra Club founder John Muir. Bioregionalism is as shown in chapter two, not as Jefferson’s vision, bound to rural or pastoral life.

The idea of character or identity as something that comes from the land is prevalent in the bioregionalism of the 1960s: identity is something you have to work with the land to acquire. In this respect, bioregionalism is closer to the Jeffersonian ideal than to Turner’s “born-again colonist” on the frontier, mastered by the wilderness and transformed into an American.¹⁰⁰ Ecocritic and author of *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrard, puts it this way: “In the western USA a movement has emerged that seeks to combine traditional agrarianism with more radical social ecological or anarchistic leanings. The term used to describe this

⁹⁹ Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth : Nature's Role in American History*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). 58.

¹⁰⁰ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*(Bremen: Outlook Verlag, 2011).

movement is 'bioregionalism'.¹⁰¹ Bioregionalism requires a co-operative economy on a communal scale. It reintroduces place much like the frontier emphasized the importance of place on the human character. Bioregionalism is ecocentric in its nature, carrying on the heritage of preservationism. It does not share the optimism, and the belief in the inexhaustible abundance of resources, of the utilitarian progressivism of the Roosevelt era. Bioregionalism is a reaction to or paradigmatic shift from the national centralized conservation period, with its professional and scientific management of nature, to a regionally oriented, decentralized, pluralist approach, which combines agrarianism with preservationism.

3.3 Utopian Settlements in the Pacific Northwest

The tradition of utopian thinking in American culture goes back to nineteenth century utopian reform movements, such as cooperative colonies, founded by reformers at places like Brook farm and Fruitlands on the east coast, as well as the older tradition of Christian communalism – as exemplified by the many Shaker communities. In *The Simple Life*, a book on ecological utopias in social movements, historian David Shi makes a separation between the communal efforts of Alcott's Fruitlands (1843) and the more individual projects of Henry David Thoreau, exemplified by his move to Walden Pond in July 1845. Despite the differences, they shared a love of the countryside, a transcendental simplicity, frugality, and a spiritual ethic. These ideas spread with the movement westward, and during the late nineteenth century, radical movements such as utopian communities existed in the Puget Sound area. Settlers moving westward were turning their backs on the ills of capitalist industrialization, and creating their own co-operative communities with alternative ideas about land use, a view of the West as one giant cornucopia and a hope to bring about a new Eden.

Historian Charles LeWarne's book, *Utopias on Puget Sound (1885-1915)*, looks at socialist, anarchist, and religious utopian communities over a period of 30 years in Washington State. One of these was the Puget Sound Co-Operative Colony, inspired by earlier utopian settlements in the east and founded by the harbor of Ediz Hook on the Olympic Peninsula. The colony was born at a time when labor unions were gaining power and working class consciousness was on the rise. Socialist ideas were taking root while economic growth was enormous – for some. For others, utopian communities seemed like the answer to bad times. It was a Romantic idea in which, put crudely, nature was good and culture bad. The

¹⁰¹ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. 127.

utopian colonies challenged the classic view of settlers as wilderness-hating exploiters seeing the land as a commodity. They do fit, however, into the narrative about the abundance and inexhaustible resources of the West. At the same time, they serve as an example of a practical outcome of some bioregional ideas like decentralization, a sustainable lifestyle, the value of staying put, and domestic life. Looking at some of the writings of the leaders of the Puget Sound Co-Operative Colony, it is clear they portray the area as an Eden in the Pacific Northwest. This Eden-like image later evolves into an “Ecotopia.” One of the leaders behind the anti-Chinese riots in Seattle, lawyer Charles V. Smith, was the first leader of the colony, and the author of a 32-page pamphlet from 1886.¹⁰² In the pamphlet, he expressed the intentions of the founders, and attracted colonists to the Puget Sound. In an excerpt from the colonist’s newspaper, *The Model Commonwealth*, from June 18, 1886, he praises the landscape as inexhaustible, with no limits to the fertility of the land.

On my first visit here three years ago, I was more favorably impressed with this place than any I had ever seen. I came to that conclusion, only after a thorough examination of its soil, which is unsurpassed, of its climate, which is unequaled. There is no harbor that will compare with it on Puget Sound. Its waters are full of fish. There are five or six streams of pure soft water emptying into the bay, fed by the melting snow from the mountains—furnishing water powers [sic] of unlimited capacity with almost inexhaustible supplies of timber within reach.¹⁰³

Historian Carlos A. Schwantes argues that nature in the Pacific Northwest “assumed heroic proportions.”¹⁰⁴ The colonists saw the western landscape as not only everlasting and limitless, but also a good character-shaper, a relief from and contrast to capitalist city life, and what they referred to as the “industrial ulcer”. The colonists did not see this land as open to all men. The owner-occupiers of *The Modern Commonwealth* used the lack of significant African American and Chinese populations as a selling point for attracting more colonists. Popular racial theories at the time, such as Social Darwinism and eugenics, influenced the leaders of the colony. This makes the colony an example of how bioregionalism can lead to pitfalls when place becomes territorial or exclusionary.

¹⁰² Charles Pierce LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound: 1885-1915*(Seattle, [Wash.]: University of Washington Press, 1995). 16-17.

¹⁰³ Kathleen Coventon, *History of the Puget Sound Cooperative Colony*(1939).

¹⁰⁴ Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest : An Interpretive History*. 368.

The writings of Charles V. Smith support the idea that natural abundance was somehow important in defining America.¹⁰⁵ The colonists defined themselves in harmony with nature, as opposed to urban, industrial life. It is an agrarian vision in the spirit of Thomas Jefferson: the land was going to make them better citizens. The colonists of Puget Sound Co-Operative Colony built their settlement next to a village of hundreds of Native Americans. The natives had lived in the area for 2700 years, living mostly of the salmon in the Elwha River. The Clallam people interacted with them through some trade, but according to LeWarne for the most part no contact was made. LeWarne suggest that the Indians were mostly seen as a curiosity, neither a hindrance nor helpful.¹⁰⁶

The colonists held the land at Ediz Hook communally; they did not sell it for profit. What separated them from the mainstream pioneer was this communal form of life, and the fact that they did not buy or sell land. This aversion to the market seems to have meant that their use of land was mainly for subsistence use, thereby respecting the “abundance” of natural resources, rather than the typical frontier practice of exploiting the land, assuming that the resource base was inexhaustible. There does not seem to exist any arguments that this use is better for nature. The main point seems to have been to become self-sufficient and to avoid being tangled up in the market. Luckily, climate, soil and water supply were all favorable.

Wheat, oats, and barley yield prolific crops: all vegetables grow to an immense size, and the soil is peculiarly adapted to the raising of fruit. Numerous streams from snowy mountains and neighboring hills furnish inexhaustible supplies of water, convenient and at small expense.¹⁰⁷

The natural recourses did not stop with fish and promising agricultural lands. The colonists needed wood for housing and as a source of energy, and timber and coal were abundant and affordable. Smith and his companions did a good job of advertising the colony as heaven on earth through pamphlets, travels and *The Modern Commonwealth*. Free healthcare, an eight-hour workday for men, six for women, and a ‘divine’ location attracted hundreds of settlers. The settlers even operated with their own currency. Prior to the land boom, most of the timber the colonists took was for their own subsistence use; even though they believed there was enough to go around, they did not take more.

¹⁰⁵ Ingeborg H. Aarsand, "Utopian Communitites and Land Use: The Puget Sound Co-Operative Colony,"(University of Washington, 2011). 5.

¹⁰⁶ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound: 1885-1915*. 34.

¹⁰⁷ Coventon, *History of the Puget Sound Cooperative Colony*.

However, in this attempt to recreate the garden of Eden there is, fittingly, a fall of man. When the colony started struggling financially, the settlers would rent out the mill to private companies and sell off timber land.¹⁰⁸ The colony grew simultaneously with the industrialization of the forests of the Pacific Northwest. The old growth forest in this area was some of the first to fall because of the excellent timber and the prime location on the bay. Combined with technological changes, such as a specialized logging railroad developed in the 1880s, the state of Washington became the number one lumber producer in the country between 1905 and 1938.¹⁰⁹ Schwantes writes that being located on the shores of the Puget Sound meant that the timber was easier to get to than in the neighboring state of Oregon. The Yukon Gold Rush in 1887 sparked a general land boom in the area, and the colonists participated. The town of Port Angeles became increasingly popular, with both the colonial east side and the regular non-colonial folks on the west side. Logging increased with the land boom, and the colonists had to intensify road construction to get the logs to market. The colonists started moving into forested land, alternatively buying and selling land, speculating to get a profit.¹¹⁰ This kept attracting people with less noble ideals to the colony, and when the market crashed in the Panic of 1893, the colony's glory days were over. The land speculation backfired, and the colony went bankrupt. In 1900 the remaining assets were sold on an auction. The colonists were hoping for salvation through what they saw as an inexhaustible landscape, but the abundance of resources made them greedy, and in the end not that different from the capitalist industrialists they so much despised. With their entanglement in the capitalist markets, their vision ultimately failed. In his book, LeWarne characterizes the colonists as a "middle class business corporation."¹¹¹

Turning their backs on urbanization, capitalism, and immigration, the Puget Sound Co-operative Colony exemplified parts of the frontier ideology. Through sharing ideas circulating at the time, ideas about the west as free land in need of cultivation, the Puget Sound Co-operative Colony fits into the national myth and emergent creation stories about frontier life, stories so crucial in defining the nation. The difference is that theirs was a communal effort; the individual freedom of the pioneer was not part of their ideology. Nonetheless, the Colony subscribed to the national myth with their reverence of the West's inexhaustible wilderness. The colonists replicated the frontier ideology by not looking to the

¹⁰⁸ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound: 1885-1915*. 41.

¹⁰⁹ Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest : An Interpretive History*. 180.

¹¹⁰ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound: 1885-1915*. 45.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 52.

federal government, but trying to come up with practical solutions on their own. On the other hand, the colony's existence was not understood as proof of God's presence on earth as suggested by Manifest Destiny, because the colonists were not religious. Their lack of religion, combined with a celebration of the locale, resembles a bioregional worldview, and becomes something other than a typical American frontier story. The colonists did not see themselves as blessed or favored by God, but by nature itself. Nature is not demonic, nor angelic, but a place of plenty made for man's happiness and well-being, a place to start a community where cultivation gives salvation. The power of landscape is the same, the idea that a certain place is very different from the rest of the nation or world. The Puget Sound Co-Operative's philosophy prepares us for Ecotopia or Cascadia because while the nation is no longer seen as exceptional, it is the region and its unique natural qualities that are exceptional. The fact that the region itself is seen as having a positive impact on people there, can be said to be sectionalist, celebratory, or even an exceptionalist trope – and has become crucial to the regional identity of the Pacific Northwest as Eden or Ecotopia.

The story is different from a regular frontier story because the colonists set out with an idea that the land was not theirs to buy and sell, and the colony was not going to make them rich. Therefore, like bioregionalism, “it involves applying for membership in a biotic community and ceasing to be its exploiter.”¹¹² It is consequently in some ways an early example of bioregionalism, but gone wrong, largely due to the boom and bust economy – never a good arrangement for a stable community.

3.4 The Age of Environmentalism and Urban Growth

Can the reason bioregionalism is taking off be because the region is newly urbanized? The notion of the Pacific Northwest as an exceptional Eden was not something that ended with the utopian colonies. Many developments in the 1960s and '70s helped the region become synonymous with Eden or Ecotopia. *Pollution in Paradise* (1962) was an award-winning documentary about the pollution of the Willamette River in northern Oregon, narrated and produced by journalist Tom McCall, who would later become governor of Oregon. The title sets the tone for what has been and will continue to be significant for the region's identity: paradise must be preserved. The Pacific Northwest has the regional identity of a place where paradise must be protected.

¹¹² Berg, "Reinhabiting California." 399.

It might seem counterintuitive, but the next peak in environmental consciousness coincided with urban growth.¹¹³ Can one reason behind the influence of bioregionalism here be because the region is newly urbanized? Massive urban growth led to the growth of environmentalism in the 1960s and '70s. The bioregional movement was reborn with urbanization in the 1960s, and bioregional pioneers such as Peter Berg, founder of Planet Drum Foundation in San Francisco, developed and gave name to these ideas. Professor in Urban Studies and Planning, Carl Abbott, suggests that this was a grass-roots culture emerging.

Cascadia and Ecotopia both came out of a distinctive regional political culture. The San Francisco Bay Area, Portland, and Seattle were all centers of grassroots work on sustainable agriculture, communal living, alternative energy systems, and other reevaluations of consumer society in the period roughly from the late 1960s to the early 1980s.¹¹⁴

Bioregional ideas like these work especially well in the Pacific Northwest because the urban areas of the region are proximate and somewhat densely settled, at least in the western part. Urban sustainability projects such as local food production can be applied in the fertile Pacific Northwest easily because of its urban and suburban areas relatively close to each other, opening up markets for local trade. Cascadia's three main cities, Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland, consist of 14 million people. Seattle hardly existed in 1840, but have since become a major regional metropolis.¹¹⁵ The West Coast experienced massive urban growth after the California Gold Rush. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Pacific Northwest served international markets, and Portland in the Willamette Valley was the key center and trading port. Urban growth, combined with a cultural history of ecological sensibilities and traditions of working closely with the land, eventually led to the growth of environmentalism. In the 1960s, the West as a whole was way above the national average when it came to urban sprawl, road construction, and car ownership. This sprawl created conflict over public land, as preservation came into conflict with extraction industries.

Portland policies on transportation development changed drastically in the 1970s.¹¹⁶ The cities shared a protest movement in the 1960s and '70s that resulted in the cancellation of

¹¹³ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*(New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982).

¹¹⁴ Abbott, "Competing Cascadias: Imagining a Region over Four Decades ". 13.

¹¹⁵ Kenneth J. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*(New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). 47.

¹¹⁶ Gregory L. Thompson, "Taming the Neighborhood Revolution: Planners, Power Brokers, and the Birth of Neotraditionalism in Portland, Oregon," *Journal of Planning History* 6, no. 214 (2007). 215.

two road projects, the R.H. Thomson Expressway in Seattle, Washington, and the Mount Hood Freeway in Portland, Oregon. Portland even approved an urban growth boundary (UGB) in 1980, in order to impose limits on urban sprawl and protect farmlands from urban development.¹¹⁷ With urbanization came garbage, and the State of Oregon and its governor Tom McCall were the first in the nation to pass bottle recycling laws that included a deposit with the “Bottle Bill” of 1971.¹¹⁸ Environmental historian Finn Arne Jørgensen argues that the reason the bill passed was that the state had a “strong environmental constituency.”¹¹⁹ In *Natural States: The Environmental Imagination in Maine, Oregon, and the Nation*, Judd and Beach argue that the planners in Oregon made an effort to include the public in planning initiatives, making sure there was a democratic process. Judd and Beach describe the planning in Oregon in the 1970s as a “planning utopia” or “Ecotopia.”¹²⁰ This refers partly to environmentally friendly urban planning and initiatives, like the urban growth boundary and the bottle bill, but also a new trend branding Oregon as a “natural” state. This trend of the 1960s and 70s helped develop ski resorts like Bend, Oregon, building malls and other real estate inspired by the natural wonders of the state, such as replicas of rock formations and the Oregon Trail. Human geographer David Ley argues that the social movements that helped change the built environment of cities such as Portland in the ’70s, is a form of local knowledge that arose with postmodernism.¹²¹

In bioregional thought, every place is a home place waiting to be reinhabited. A way to do this is through urban agriculture. Jeffrey Craig Sander’s book *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (2010) shows how during the ecological turn of the 1970s, a link between urban and the rural was made through an urban reinhabitation movement. His book explains how people whom he calls “bioregional utopians”¹²² remade the region into Ecotopia in the 1960s and ’70s. This group of grass-roots activists, that went on to form the organization Tilth, inspired by people like writer and farmer Wendell Berry, built their bioregional movement on a “flexible and pragmatic” foundation.¹²³ Food and

¹¹⁷ Myung-Jin Jun, "The Effects of Portland's Urban Growth Boundary on Urban Development Patterns and Commuting," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 7 (2004). 1333.

¹¹⁸ Finn Arne Jørgensen, *Making a Green Machine: The Infrastructure of Beverage Container Recycling* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011). 17.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 83.

¹²⁰ R.W. Judd, *Natural States: "The Environmental Imagination in Maine, Oregon, and the Nation"* (Taylor & Francis, 2013). 248.

¹²¹ David Ley, "Forgetting Postmodernism? Recuperating a Social History of Local Knowledge," *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no. 5 (2003). 540.

¹²² Jeffrey C. Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability : Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010). 133.

¹²³ Ibid. 136.

consumer activists worked with broad social movements through initiatives such as the P-patch program in Seattle, Washington, to engage white hippies, immigrant farmers, and elderly people, in community efforts to grow food in urban spaces, resisting gentrification at the same time.¹²⁴ The P-patchers also worked pragmatically – these “ecotopians were willing to engage with capitalism”.¹²⁵ This eventually led to a food revolution, where the combination of a lush and green environment, rich in natural resources such as logging, dairy, fish, and orchards, with a public who valued local and organic produce, created a regional alternative food culture, symbolized by Seattle’s Pike Place Market.¹²⁶ A bioregional, meaningful relationship to place thereby included the urban place. Efforts like the P-patch program help show how the region is an example of overcoming an urban-rural dichotomy in environmentalism and place-based thinking. This shows that bioregionalism has a place in urban areas, and is more than just a rural dream. Broadening out bioregionalism through including more diverse groups and connecting bioregionalism to political and economic themes such as public health, answers some of the critiques from academics and environmental justice activists.

Bioregional thinking can affect many people in urban areas. Sustainable food is offered through community gardens, farmers’ markets, and food co-ops. These spaces can also count as meaningful places in a local community where social, cultural and economic interactions are being made. These urban efforts take bioregionalism’s dedication to community to a completely new level, where bioregional ideas can be applied on a large scale. Sanders says that the ecotopian bioregionalists of the region, who helped create the food revolution, relied on what he calls a “useful mythology of place” based on a “powerful and useful origin myth,”¹²⁷ namely Callenbach’s novel *Ecotopia*.

The word Ecotopia has been absorbed into the culture, often thrown around by writers to describe Seattle or Portland or San Francisco. In *Emerald City*, author Matthew Klingle argues that Seattle turned into an Ecotopia by the late 20th century, pointing to increased amount of bicycle lanes and electric buses.¹²⁸ An article on Forbes.com from 2010, about the economic development in the Bay area and the Pacific Northwest is appropriately entitled

¹²⁴ Ibid. 167.

¹²⁵ Scott Russell Sanders, *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World*(Boston: Beacon Press (MA), 1993). 144.

¹²⁶ Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability : Inventing Ecotopia*. 178.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 139.

¹²⁸ M.W. Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle*(Yale University Press, 2007). 231- 235.

“Welcome to Ecotopia.”¹²⁹ This exemplifies how both mainstream media and environmental historians have taken up the term. In the case of Forbes, it is not used as a compliment, but to suggest the North Westerners are more concerned with “quality of life than making a living,” letting its “fearsome planning regime” invest hundreds of millions in bike lanes while the unemployment rate rises.¹³⁰ According to Carl Abbott, the term is often used ironically, which I believe suggests that the term is relatively well known among writers aware of the environmental image of the region.¹³¹

Despite the regional image as Ecotopia, there has been trouble in paradise. The two largest battles over regional environmental issues have been the fight over the redwood forest in the Pacific Northwest and the controversy over the spotted owl. The region has also had problems with the overfishing of salmon, and dam construction is also taking its toll on the salmon streams. This stands in contrast to the region’s (self-)constructed eco-image. These negative developments are not necessarily regional mistakes, they are part of big business and federal politics, but these issues show that the green image has its cracks. A part of this eco-image has been to try to keep others out. A popular bumper sticker in the 1970s in Oregon spelled out “Go Back Where You Came From,” and another one said, “Keep Oregon Green, Clean – and Lean.” It might seem like the sticker makers forgot about mean. The context was that the stream of Californian tourism was taking its toll on the environment and this got Oregonians worried.

The environmental history of the region and the geographical conditions outlined above tell us that bioregionalism has been influential in the Pacific Northwest, and it tells us something about why this happened. Having then established that there are some common perceptions of the Pacific Northwest as a “green” and “natural” place, I will make the argument that the growth of a green culture can be a strategy for forming the region into one where ecological awareness is a cultural type of power that creates a new origin story, a new authenticity.¹³²

An example of a recent expression of this power is the sketch comedy TV show *Portlandia* (IFC), which is currently airing. The show is, in addition to being comedy entertainment, no less than an attempt to visualize cultural lifestyle choices, such as bicycling and public transportation, and organic and locally produced food, representing regional

¹²⁹ Joel Kotkin, "Welcome to Ecotopia," Forbes.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Abbott, "Competing Cascadias: Imagining a Region over Four Decades ". 14.

¹³² S. Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2009). 61.

contemporary ideals of sustainable living, like the Sanders book exemplified. If this ecological awareness then becomes a regional ideal, settling is the next logical step. Only through knowing a place and its character – in other words, developing a sense of place – will you be able to make environmentally sustainable choices. Reinhabitation cannot be an exclusively rural project; half of the earth’s population is urbanized, and city-dwellers need green strategies to shift to a more sustainable way of life. The question is: What can this green cultural power contribute towards solving some of the environmental issues at stake? The next chapter proposes that this type of green, practical regionalism can stir up action.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to do empirical research on what those who live in a particular place say, and what they value about their own experience in, and understanding of, the place. A phenomenological and qualitative approach to try and capture what each person experiences in a place – possibly with using Heidegger’s concept of dwelling – could be an interesting research topic in a place in the Pacific Northwest seen as particularly eco-friendly. Some research has been done on this, in the article “Ecotopian Exceptionalism,” in which Proctor and Berry ask: “Is nature spirituality and the prominence of nature utopias and dystopias a distinctive, exceptionalist feature of the region?”¹³³ By looking back at the environmental history of the region, I have so far claimed that it has a green image. This phenomenon is grounded in public self-identification, as Proctor and Berry suggest that the Cascadians see themselves as “connected to the land,”; “awake from the mainstream”; and “progressive and environmentally aware.”¹³⁴

A major finding of Proctor and Berry’s research is the result that shows how the people of the Pacific Northwest are not as different from the rest of the nation as they think they are, when it comes to what they actually do for the environment, yet the region’s history of conservation speaks otherwise, and there is a great deal of importance in people *perceiving* themselves and their communities as more “environmentally aware,” especially when new initiatives require more radical changes.

The interviewees suggested that this awareness came from “the surrounding natural landscape.”¹³⁵ This suggests that people still believe landscape functions as a shaper of character, as they did in the utopian colonies of the late 1800s. Proctor and Berry observe this as a sign of Pacific Northwestern exceptionalism, and argue that this way of thinking about

¹³³ James D. ; Berry Proctor, Evan, "Ecotopian Exceptionalism," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, no. [JSRNC 5.2 (2011) 145-163] (2011). 146.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 155.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 155.

the region is very close to the ideals of Callenbach's *Ecotopia*. Statistics show that Americans are more patriotic than people of other nationalities.¹³⁶ However, Cascadia is not national, it is bi-national, as it includes British Columbia. The exceptionalism in Cascadia must then be something separate from United States patriotism. In his article, "The Americanization of Utopia," which traces the American Fourierist movement, Carl J. Guarneri suggests that ecological utopias can help overcome the historical "marriage between utopia and the nation."¹³⁷ Is bioregionalism then a post-nationalist utopia? If the Cascadians view themselves as more environmentally conscious than others, coupled with a bioregional sense of place, I see two possible readings of this. One is Proctor and Berry's interpretation, the "Ecotopian Exceptionalism" that has replaced Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism, but in which the sense of place in the worst case can become reactionary, exclusive or territorial. The other, more hopeful, reading of the green regional identity is one in which instigating practical regionalism inspires others to find their own democratic and pluralist ways of thinking bioregionally. Therefore, there are two sides to exceptionalism: one coupled with nationalism which results in racism, as it did with the colonists on Puget Sound, and one that has to do with organizing place into living communities.

Having introduced the idea of Cascadia and shown how the regional identity is largely linked to natural setting and an "Ecotopian Exceptionalism," the question arises of how this manifests itself in the environmental movements and initiatives of the region. Bioregionalist Doug Aberly hopes that bioregionalism will integrate with other political movements, and that bioregionalism's connection with movements for social change will make it more relevant for today.

Perhaps the greatest hope for bioregional activity lies in this integration with other movements. Bioregionalism supports place-based cultural transformation. The bioregion could become the political arena within which resistance against ecological and social exploitation could be produced.¹³⁸

The idea of Cascadia has inspired the counter-globalization movement. "Could there also be a tie between Cascadians' distrust of traditional institutions and their being among the first in North America to organize mass protests against globalization?"¹³⁹ asks Douglass Todd in

¹³⁶ Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996). Chapter 1.

¹³⁷ Carl J. Guarneri, "The Americanization of Utopia: Fourierism and the Dilemma of Utopian Dissent in the United States," *Utopian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1994). 85.

¹³⁸ Aberly, "Interpreting Bioregionalism - a Story from Many Voices." 34.

¹³⁹ Todd, *Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia : Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest* . 10.

Cascadia, The Elusive Utopia. The idea of Cascadia as an alternative to the nation state, or as a new, different scale on which to operate, has support amongst radical environmentalist groups in the Pacific Northwest. The idea of an ecological nation torn from the rest of the country, which originated with the thought experiment of Callenbach's novel *Ecotopia*, will be discussed in the next chapter. How this wider movement makes use of bioregional ideas, and to what extent it is constructive or not, is outside the scope of this thesis, but would be an interesting topic for further research.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has traced bioregional thought and practice in the American West, and in particular, the Pacific Northwest. It asked whether or not the Pacific Northwest has been an especially fertile ground for bioregionalist thought and why. In answering this, I found that the regional identity is still linked to the natural world, creating an "Ecotopian Exceptionalism," and that it has been the case since the migration westwards. Utopian dreams for this region seem to linger. This has helped bioregional ideas take on. The Puget Sound Cooperative Colony, environmentally friendly urban planning in Oregon, and urban sustainability projects in Seattle, exemplified bioregional ideas, such as grass-root efforts with a combination of agrarianism, the wilderness ideal, and pragmatism. This green regional identity has outcomes such as the idea of the bioregion of Cascadia, and can at best instigate practical regionalism and inspire democratic ways of thinking bioregionally.

4 Bioregional Utopias: *Ecotopia*

4.1 Callenbach's *Ecotopia*

As early as Plato's *The Republic* (427-347 B.C.), there have been attempts to imagine ideal societies. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* in 1516 established utopias as a literary genre, and there have been many literary examples of utopian societies since then. The origin of the term utopia comes from the Greek *outopia*, meaning "nowhere," and *eutopia*, meaning "good place." Ernest Callenbach's cultural production of an ecological utopia is the self-published, futuristic novel *Ecotopia* (1975), which vividly describes how bioregional societies could work. Callenbach grew up in Appalachia, but later moved to Berkley, California. Etymologically, the name Ecotopia means "home place," and is a portmanteau of "Ecological Utopia." "Eco-" comes from the Greek *oikos*, meaning "home," and "-topia" comes from *topos*, meaning "place." Ecotopia is therefore literally a home place – a bioregional place of life and a logical doctrine on which to build a community.¹⁴⁰ *Ecotopia* the novel is the story of a decentralized and ecological nation separated politically from the rest of the United States. It is the most famed and most read utopian novel; over a million copies have been sold, and the book is taught in universities. Callenbach had trouble getting the book published, and as a work of fiction *Ecotopia* is indeed lacking: there is no ambivalence, no irony, and not much character development. The quality of language is also variable. There have also been critiques of the ways he portrays race and gender. However, the word Ecotopia has become a cultural reference – and is somewhat responsible for the popularity of the idea of "Cascadia" gaining popularity throughout the 1970s up until today. The year before the book was published, two similar books saw print. Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* and Ursula K Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* are good examples of other literary ecological utopias and their counterparts, horrible dystopias.

Even though most of the story takes place in the Californian part of the land of Ecotopia, its ideas have been incorporated into the North West's regional identity. The terms "Ecotopian" and "Cascadian" are in effect new versions of "the promised land." Cascadia is, however, a much more general word, that references the geography and climate of the region, and is used as another name for the region. Ecotopia references the book specifically, and is less general than Cascadia. Yet *Ecotopia* the book is mentioned several times in the film

¹⁴⁰ Thayer, *Lifepace: Bioregional Thought and Practice* 3.

Occupied Cascadia (discussed in chapter five). In the film, the bioregional movers and shakers share how *Ecotopia* has affected them and planted ideas in them.

The book was popular when it came out, gaining a large audience and it became a bestseller. Ultimately, it spread outside the congregation of bioregionalists. Part of the public now recognizes that bioregional ideas and the word “Ecotopia” as pertaining to the region itself, as I argued previously. The term came from Callenbach, and was then reiterated in the book *The Nine Nations of North America* (1981), written by journalist Joel Garreau. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Scott Slovic (University of Nevada) makes a statement about the impact of the book: “‘Ecotopia’ became almost immediately absorbed into the popular culture, and a pioneer of the growing literature-and-the-environment movement. You hear people talking about the idea of Ecotopia, or about the Northwest as Ecotopia.”¹⁴¹

In the novel *Ecotopia*, one chosen person, the reporter Will Weston (a play on the Wild West?) travels to “the other side” – a futuristic state split off from the United States – a place that was disrupted by US culture, but is being reinhabited into an independent, self-sufficient place where all political decisions depend on their impact on the natural environment. The book uses the nation of Ecotopia to comment on the apocalyptic nightmares of an unsustainable culture and society – the dystopia that is the US, suggesting social and environmental reforms. Its use of science fiction is a way to mirror what is going on in the US in the 1970s. Contrary to the US, Ecotopia has an economy with no growth, and limits the working week to 20 hours, giving the people time for free love, art, and entertainment. Decentralization is everywhere; everything from television, hospitals, and schools, to agriculture, is broken up into small units, and organic food is locally grown. In his reports back to the United States, reporter Will Weston sums up how decentralization works in Ecotopia.

Decentralization affected every aspect of life. Medical services were dispersed; the claim is that instead of massive hospitals in the city centers, besieged by huge lines of waiting patients, there were small hospitals and clinics everywhere, and a neighborhood-oriented system of medical aides. Schools were broken up and organized on a novel teacher-controlled basis. Agricultural, fishery, and forestry enterprises were also reorganized and decentralized. Large factory-farms were broken up through a strict enforcement of irrigation acreage regulations which had

¹⁴¹ Scott Timberg, "The Novel That Predicted Portland," *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/14/fashion/14ecotopia.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1&.

been ignored before Independence, and commune and extended-family farms were encouraged.¹⁴²

For the reporter, the decentralization seems to have an impact on the health of the Ecotopians. In organizing their society this way, the effects are not only beneficial to the natural environment, but also to social life and well-being. “The health and general well-being of the people are undeniable. While the extreme decentralization and emotional openness of the society seem alien to an American at first, they too have much to be said in their favor.”¹⁴³

The Do-it-yourself, or Arts and crafts culture, is alive in Ecotopia – people construct their own houses and play in their own bands, and there is not much difference between professional and amateur. The egalitarian Ecotopians see their governmental and cultural separatism from the United States as leading to better and less destructible outcomes at the ecological and cultural levels. So far, the Ecotopians are mostly using a diverse range of methods, finding local solutions shaped after the needs of place. However, there is one principle that comes before attention to place. The Ecotopians have a national goal of a population decline of 0.3 percent a year.¹⁴⁴ This goal references the Malthusian ideas from Paul Erich’s *The Population Bomb* from 1968, and can hardly be seen as democratic, as it limits Ecotopian women’s right to make decisions about their own bodies and reproduction. In any case, the reporter goes into Ecotopia thinking that the Ecotopian state is strong and fascist, but besides this rule of population decline, he finds that the state does not exercise power often.

Throughout the book, there are several references to Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* and the danger of pesticides. The forms of energy are completely non-polluting – a stretch compared to the real world, in which all energy use has consequences. Nature in Ecotopia is seen as stable and harmonious, a popular misconception of ecology in the 1970s. The ways cities are organized are in line with American city planning ideals that involve injecting the countryside into the city, along lines suggested by Ebenezer Howard’s communitarian garden city, except no cars are allowed. People live in self-contained mini-cities that work like satellites, all in close proximity to a major transit-center. Especially representative of bioregional thinking is the decentralization of Ecotopia into nine ecological sections. The idea that each region has a distinct character is a bioregional one. Political scientist Marius de

¹⁴² Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975). 68.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 164.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 69.

Geus theorizes about what the successful management of the nine regions leads to in his book *Ecological Utopias - Envisioning the Sustainable Society*: “They are therefore capable of anticipating natural and environmental problems within their area and determining the area’s ecological stability, in the sense of maintaining a dynamic equilibrium.”¹⁴⁵

In the last part of the book, the Ecotopians kidnap Will Weston and take him to a resort. The Ecotopians are trying to get him to show his real emotions, and are waiting for him to reject America and admit that he wants to stay and live in Ecotopia. Then he has an epiphany.

Suddenly I caught sight of myself in the mirror. The hair stood up on the back of my neck. I looked awful, I didn’t look human! My image was tight, stiff. I sat down, stunned. Then, curious, I finished tying the tie, and put on the jacket besides, and went over to the mirror again. This time the ugly American me was almost sickening – I really thought I might have to throw up. I was filled with the desire to get into the hot water of the baths. My body longed to get out of those terrible clothes and sink into the lovely supporting water and just float there.¹⁴⁶

Notice how much this passage resembles Frederick Jackson Turner’s essay, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893.) The Wild West, the ecological utopia that is Ecotopia, transforms Will Weston. He is a new product, an Ecotopian man.

The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin.... Before long, he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick.... In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so . . . little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe.... The fact is, that here is a new product that is American...¹⁴⁷

What can be drawn from the passage is that Will Weston is reborn in the water and with his Ecotopian love interest, who conceives a Ecotopian child at the end of *Ecotopia*. Water takes on a new mystical power of spiritual cleansing for him. The narrative says something about the dialectic of progress, both challenging the notion of economic growth as the way to live a

¹⁴⁵ Marius de Geus, *Ecological Utopias: Envisioning the Sustainable Society*(Utrecht: International books, 1999). 177.

¹⁴⁶ Callenbach, *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston*. 178.

¹⁴⁷ Turner, *The Frontier in American History*. 2-3.

better life and proposing an alternative discourse, a countercultural depiction of progress and modernity. The themes of reinhabitation and spiritual healing, through repairing environmental degradation, provide the context that permits the reporter to learn how to “live in place.” He becomes a better person, stripped of the garments of modernity. In the end, it is not the West or Manifest Destiny, but the bioregional utopia that is Ecotopia and its positive effects that change Will Weston. The novel’s particular notion of an ecological utopia should not be read as a blueprint for communities to follow or copy, but as a form of critical thinking that engages an environmental awareness based on place.

4.2 Practical Regionalism

Some critics will say that urban growth lies at the heart of environmental degradation. Others will respond that you cannot blame rural extraction industries like logging or mining, because the extraction of these resources is just meeting the demands of urban space. This thesis is set up with the assumption that we have to live in cities; there are too many of us not to. Efforts such as the urban farming of the P-patchers in Seattle take on bioregionalism’s submission to community on a larger scale. Bioregional urban initiatives are good responses to the critique of bioregionalism’s inclination towards the countryside, and are small but important attempts at overcoming the urban-rural dichotomy that bioregionalism has been criticized for keeping alive. I will sketch out a short introduction of utopian thought and argue that bioregionalism is a part of this utopian thinking, and that it has a pragmatic side to it. There are fewer utopian aspirations in our current age than in the 1890s, 1960s, or 1970s. How should we consider the utopias of the past? Are they blueprints, models or merely sources of inspiration? Journalist and author of *Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia*, Douglas Todd, has high hopes for the change the imagined region of Cascadia can bring about.

Many believe that, while Cascadia might not be the launching point for a global revolution, there is a spiritually informed mindset of optimism, inventiveness, tolerance and ferment here that suggests the region could become a model for measured progressive transformation, especially regarding to how people of the planet interact with nature.¹⁴⁸

Cascadia or Ecotopia provides a way of talking about bioregionalism in the Pacific Northwest. An older attempt at reimagining regions was *The Culture of Cities* (1938), a book

¹⁴⁸ Todd, *Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia : Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest* 11.

by one of the earliest regionalists of the United States, historian and urban critic Lewis Mumford, who early on imagined an eco-region. In this following quote, he sums up what this region could look like for the people:

We must create in every region people who will be accustomed, from school onward, to humanist attitudes, cooperative methods, rational controls. These people will know in detail where they live and how they live: they will be united by a common feeling for their landscape, their literature and language, their local ways, and out of their own self-respect they will have a sympathetic understanding with other regions and different local peculiarities.¹⁴⁹

Mumford's vision of a region lives on in bioregionalist Peter Berg's definition of a bioregion as something both geographical and cultural: "A bioregion refers both to geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness – to a place and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place."¹⁵⁰

Several environmental groups and initiatives, academics, and artists speak of Cascadia as a place and a culture. Not only environmentalists use ecological utopia as a selling point for the region – so does big business. A recent example of how the concept of Cascadia is seeping into the mainstream is an Adidas soccer commercial from 2012, which starts with the Cascadian flag – "The Doug" – waving in the wind. The Cascadia "scheme," or "project," is principally a boosterish trade and advertising alliance, capitalizing on Cascadia as a free trade heaven, says Geographer Matthew Sparke at the University of Washington. His article "Not a State, but More Than a State of Mind," criticizes business for using the natural history of Cascadia to "brand and market it in the global circuits of consumption and investment."¹⁵¹

So what is the potential of utopias based on ecological principles other than as marketing strategies for businesses? Utopian theorists like Tom Moylan and his conception of a "critical utopia" can explain how utopian thinking in general can contribute to political theory and debate. Moylan's book, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (1986), introduces the term "critical utopia." This idea is a response to the critics of utopianism, because critical utopias are "imperfect and in process," writes David Landis

¹⁴⁹ Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938). 386.

¹⁵⁰ Berg, *Reinhabiting a Separate Country: A Bioregional Anthology of Northern California*

¹⁵¹ Matthew Sparke, "Not a State, but More Than a State of Mind: Cascading Cascadias and the Geo-Economics of Cross-Border Regionalism," in *Globalization, Regionalization, and Cross-Border Regions*, ed. Markus Perkmann and Ngai-Ling Sum (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). 235.

Barnhill (University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.)¹⁵² Barnhill upholds that this imperfection makes bioregionalism easier to defend as a utopian project.

This thesis is rooted in Moylan's premise that Utopias can be useful as spaces where we can be different, and that Utopias can change the way we think. Lucy Sargisson (University of Nottingham) suggests using the theory in physical space as well as literary space: "I sought to pursue these ideas into the cultural text of experienced reality, as well as within the written texts of fictional and theoretical utopias."¹⁵³ Utopian theory can explain how ecological utopias in literature like Callenbach's fantasy world *Ecotopia* can influence real space. Ruth Levitas (University of Bristol) writes about what leading utopian theorist Ernst Bloch¹⁵⁴ saw as the functions of utopias:

There is a tendency to think of utopia as being one of two things: either a totalitarian political project, or a literary genre of fictions about perfect societies. Both these approaches are very different from that of Ernst Bloch (1986), whose 1400-page *Das Prinzip Hoffnung (The Principle of Hope)* is the most important theoretical treatment of utopia. Bloch's argument was that the propensity to reach for a better life is manifest in everyday life, in popular culture, in "high" culture, and in religion. It is a way of expressing the experience of lack, of dissatisfaction, of "something's missing", in the actuality of human existence.¹⁵⁵

In this case, argues Levitas, utopias are mainly a longing for a better way of life. There is a difference between desire and hope here, between the expressive and the instrumental. Levitas explains how Ernst Bloch sees a "transformational power"¹⁵⁶ in the movement from desire to hope. My argument then is that place, and ecological utopias, have a role to play in environmental thinking because of this transformational power and because of its pragmatic aspects.

4.3 Pragmatism and Bioregionalism

In his essay, "Environmental Pragmatism and Bioregionalism," Kelvin J. Booth interprets the idea of bioregionalism as one skeptical of any large master plan, preferring to take small steps

¹⁵² Barnhill, "Critical Utopianism and Bioregional Ecocriticism." 214.

¹⁵³ Lucy Sargisson, "Green Utopias of Self and Other," in *The Philosophy of Utopia*, ed. Barbara Goodwin (London and New York: Routledge, 2001). 140.

¹⁵⁴ *The Principle of Hope* was originally published in three volumes in German in 1954, 1955, and 1959. It was first published in English in 1986.

¹⁵⁵ Ruth Levitas, "For Utopia: The (Limits of the) Utopian Function in Late Capitalist Society," in *The Philosophy of Utopia*, ed. Barbara Goodwin (London: Routledge, 2001). 27.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 29.

and use a diverse range of methods because of the risk of forcing grand schemes on a democratic society.¹⁵⁷ This is inspired by Andrew Light and Eric Katz's strategy of environmental pragmatism as a new philosophical position in environmental thought.¹⁵⁸ He says bioregionalism has utopian characteristics, but that in our present state of environmental degradation and destruction anything will sound utopian. Booth uses the term "pragmatic utopianism" about bioregionalism – suggesting it is a form of utopianism planted in real-life troubles that succeed in stirring up action to attain a better future. He proposes that bioregionalism is just another type of environmental pragmatism because its ethic of "reinhabitation" is inherently pragmatic. Reinhabitation starts with assessing a problem, and comes up with local solutions shaped for the specific place. Booth remarks that this is a strength because place comes first – and principles come thereafter. As Booth remarks, "a single fundamental principle is not likely to be useful across the diversity of actual problematic situations."¹⁵⁹ Because bioregionalism both as an idea and as a grass-roots movement has a tradition of being democratic, sustainable and open to diverse solutions, Booth says bioregionalism is both pluralist and democratic – the two ground pillars of pragmatism. Bioregionalism can be contrasted with ecocentrism, which subscribes to one fundamental ethical principle and "place becomes, in that case, an instrument in the service of a set of principles."¹⁶⁰ Booth's argument suggests that bioregionalism is more useful than ecocentrist ideas such as deep ecology, because of bioregionalism's pragmatism. Bioregionalism is more than just a theory or an idea, or a principle to subscribe to; it has a do-it-yourself ring to it and is concerned with action and adaptation to a locality. This impulse to adapt comes in many varieties, and bioregionalism and reinhabitation strategies are as "multifaceted and diverse as the places themselves."¹⁶¹ Humanistic geographer Edward Relph says that pragmatic bioregionalism shares postmodernism's critique of modernity's standardization and undermining of local solutions, and that postmodernity's celebration of cultural diversity makes it oriented towards place. He writes that:

Perhaps the most hopeful, reasonable strategy for dealing with emerging social and environmental challenges is to find ways to mitigate their effects in particular places. This strategy requires that every locality, place, and community must adapt differently. A pragmatic sense of place can simultaneously facilitate these

¹⁵⁷ Booth, "Environmental Pragmatism and Bioregionalism." 81.

¹⁵⁸ Andrew Light and Eric Katz, *Environmental Pragmatism* (London: Routledge, 1996). 5.

¹⁵⁹ Booth, "Environmental Pragmatism and Bioregionalism." 72.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 72.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* 73.

adaptations, contribute to a broader awakening of sense of place, and reinforce the spirit of place in all its diverse manifestations.¹⁶²

Booth's article is mainly concerned with the usefulness of down-to-earth bioregionalism, but he argues for other functions bioregionalism can have. "It is a cultural movement that involves artistic and spiritual values and personal and community identities."¹⁶³ Human geographer Yu Fu-Tuan makes a point similar to Booth; he combines the pragmatic aspect with the imaginary: "Mythical space is an intellectual construct. It can be very elaborate. Mythical space is also a response of feeling and imagination to fundamental human needs."¹⁶⁴ Ecological Utopias or mythical spaces stretch our imagination, not so much presenting practical suggestions as providing hope for the future, argues Krishan Kumar.¹⁶⁵ Lawrence Buell has suggested that "the environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination".¹⁶⁶ What Buell says is that a lack of vision or stories that challenge contemporary society and thought makes it hard to try to imagine and talk about another kind of world. Central to the general assumption of this thesis is the premise that in order to come up with better solutions for the environment, we need to be able to imagine and inspire great things. This suggests one value of ideas like the bioregion of Cascadia. In imagining a ecological utopia or a bioregion we evoke Bloch's transformative power of hope, which can lead to political action. Tuan, however, does not want to give up on the practical side of his mythical space: "Mythical space is a conceptual schema, but it is also pragmatic space in the sense that within the schema a large number of practical activities, such as the planting and harvesting of crops, are ordered."¹⁶⁷ This quote shows how Callenbach's *Ecotopia* can be interpreted as an example of both a pragmatic and mythical space.

4.4 Conclusion

If we accept Ernst Bloch's argument that utopias can be successful in bringing about change because of its inspirational value, *Ecotopia* has had quite the impact. This chapter has shown the usefulness of bioregional ideas, and has showed how the book *Ecotopia* has become a

¹⁶² Edward Relph, "A Pragmatic Sense of Place," *Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter* 20, no. 3 (2009). 31.

¹⁶³ Booth, "Environmental Pragmatism and Bioregionalism." 79.

¹⁶⁴ Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* 99.

¹⁶⁵ Krishan Kumar, *Utopianism*(Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991). 3.

¹⁶⁶ Buell, *The Environmental Imagination : Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. 2.

¹⁶⁷ Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* 17.

cultural reference tied to the idea of the Pacific Northwest as an ecological region. The chapter proposed that bioregionalism is a form of pragmatic utopianism, which can stir up environmental action that can generate workable solutions. Reading *Ecotopia* as a version of practical regionalism, the value of the book seems unmistakable. *Ecotopia* has had a cultural impact on the Pacific Northwest, and has influenced the Cascadian secessionist movement. In my analysis of the novel, I have looked at the regionalist, pragmatic utopia it portrays, and suggested that it has pragmatic qualities but is more useful as inspiration or hope for the future than as practical advice. *Ecotopia* is both radical, utopian, and somewhat practical. It is both a type of mythical space and a practical ecological utopia. In many ways, the book already parallels the stories from chapter three of neighborhood activists in Portland, fighting against new roads, or urban farmers in Seattle planting community gardens in the 1970s. The inspiration must have gone both ways.

5 The Cascadian Imagination

5.1 Introduction

To imagine Cascadia is an attempt to activate political change and a way to constitute place. In chapters three and four, I discussed pragmatic and utopian aspects of bioregionalism with clear utopian aspects. The next two chapters deal with how bioregionalist thought implies a cultural practice of imagined place. In his essay, “Critical Utopianism and Bioregional Ecocriticism,” Barnhill aligns these two ideas, echoing Moylan’s conception of a critical utopianism as an expression of a longing or hope for a better way of life. There are two sides to bioregionalism, Barnhill argues. This chapter deals with the “radical, transformist, and utopian aspect, imagining and working toward an ideal society in harmony with the community of life.”¹⁶⁸

Cascadia provides a way of bringing up the topic of both utopias and bioregionalism in the Pacific Northwest. As I showed in chapter two, there is a critique coming from radical environmentalism that blames American mainstream environmentalism for looking outward to wilderness spaces, overlooking *place*. In *Topophilia* (1974), humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan indicate that “In some ideal future, our loyalty will be given only to the home region of intimate memories and, at the other end of the scale, to the whole earth.”¹⁶⁹ At the same time, he stresses how topophilia – the human love of place – cannot be claimed for too big an area, but should be an area you can know. The point here is that empires and nation states are too big for us to exercise topophilia, but that the earth itself may ask it of us. Bioregionalism maintains that the bioregion – with its local practices, myths, and norms – is the ideal level for initiating environmental change. In *Writing for an Endangered World*, ecocritic Lawrence Buell repeats this point when he asks us to take “a closer look at how the imagination of place-connectedness itself works.” Buell is concerned with our imagination because “an awakened sense of physical location and of belonging to some sort of place-based community has a great deal to do with activating environmental concern.”¹⁷⁰

This chapter will consider how place is constituted in the bioregional film *Occupied Cascadia* (2012), a narrative of the imagined bioregion of Cascadia. Considering Cascadia as both a constructed image as well as a space built on a history and a geography of a region, it

¹⁶⁸ Barnhill, "Critical Utopianism and Bioregional Ecocriticism." 212-213.

¹⁶⁹ Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* 102.

¹⁷⁰ Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. And Beyond*, 2.

makes sense to talk about it both ecocritically and geographically. Like Cascadia, bioregionalism is a duality: both a cultural construct calling on the memories and history of a place and a geographical concept built on physical and biological boundaries. Lawrence Buell explains this duality as “a myth of mutual constructionism (both natural and human-built) shaping in some measure the cultures that in some measure continually refashion it.”¹⁷¹ Cascadia is both socially defined as well as geographically defined. In his essay, “Environmental Pragmatism and Bioregionalism,” Kelvin J. Booth argues bioregionalism means “seeing one’s identity in terms of membership in a biotic community.”¹⁷² An example of this “membership” is the suggestion that people east of the Cascades are not in the same social world as people west of that mountain range.¹⁷³ Just as many tend to overlook this more conservative, dry, and rural region east of the Cascades when talking about Cascadia, it will consequently be left out of this thesis. It is climatically, culturally, and biologically different. The existence of Cascadia implies that there is a distinct cultural identity that exists only west of the mountains.

How we imagine places must have implications for how we raise public environmental awareness. Phenomenology is concerned with humans’ being-in-the-world and asks how do you imagine, remember and make up place. Place may be understood as a phenomenological and personal experience that depends on what you do. Phenomenology deals with attachment, concern, and involvement, and is an interpretive study of the human experience. Bioregionalism sees people as intertwined in nature, and so does phenomenology. A bioregion is something you can feel. “Crossing from Nebraska into Kansas has no sensible effect, but the shift from the tall grass prairie to the short grass prairie is vividly apparent to all the senses,”¹⁷⁴ writes Lynch, Glotfelty, and Armbruster, in their introduction to the essay collection *The Bioregional Imagination* (2012). This chapter employs a phenomenological approach to the relationship between people and places, looking at human imagination, and new myths and stories about place. Lawrence Buell argues that “during the last quarter of the twentieth century ‘place’ has made a comeback in humanistic and social theory, after falling out of favor as a category of analysis.”¹⁷⁵ Ecocritic Greg Garrard suggests there is a revival of these ideas arising now. “Social ecology and anarchism more generally, seem to be

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 6.

¹⁷² Booth, “Environmental Pragmatism and Bioregionalism.”75.

¹⁷³ A quick look at the results of the 2012 presidential election in Oregon and Washington shows a division where the Democratic Party won the west and the Republicans won the east. The dividing line coincides with the Cascade Mountains and commentators talk of a “Cascadian curtain”.

¹⁷⁴ Lynch, Glotfelty, and Armbruster, *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place* 5.

¹⁷⁵ Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. And Beyond*. 56.

experiencing a resurgence in the anti-globalization and bioregional movements.”¹⁷⁶ Ecocritics seem to agree that place-attachment at the bioregional level has reappeared in environmental thought and practice. With this chapter, I aim to show one version of this return.

Moreover, this chapter asks how you create an imaginative space parallel to real space. I will describe how the subjects in the documentary film, *Occupied Cascadia* (2012), interpret Cascadia as place, linking real and imaginative spaces. I will attempt to answer questions such as: How do they conceive of place? What stories do the people tell and how do they imagine place? What memories or thoughts do they share and what kinds of perception of place do they have? In my reading of *Occupied Cascadia*, I will not go into the details of the ecological rhetoric or imagery used in the film, but concentrate on the film’s informants and what they say. A mix of representatives of indigenous cultures in the area, environmental activists, scholars, and writers are interviewed in the film. Will the people interviewed in the film agree on the basic bioregional principle, that reinhabitation can fix the broken relationship between humans and the natural world, that a sense of place literally can restore environmental damage? What could be possible outcomes of their place-creation? In posing these questions, I am aware of the strengths and limitations the film presents as a cultural text: how questions are framed, and to whom they are posed.

5.2 *Occupied Cascadia* (2012) – A Phenomenological Reading

Occupied Cascadia is a documentary released in 2012 by Cascadia Matters, a group of bioregional artists and media activists located in Bend, Oregon, trying to create public awareness about the bioregion of the Pacific Northwest called Cascadia.¹⁷⁷ The title says something important about the film’s intended audience, bioregionalists and supporters of the Occupy Movement that began in 2011, seeking social and economic equality through their protests against the financial system. It also references the bioregional concept of reinhabitation, where the goal is to cease being an occupant and become an inhabitant of place. The title can also be read as a comment on the white man’s occupation of native land, or the feeling of being occupied by greedy exploiters of the natural world. The main goal of

¹⁷⁶ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. 33.

¹⁷⁷ Financial support came from a list of people, their names are available on the Cascadia Matters webpage. The film has not been released for a wider audience. Several film-festivals have scheduled the film, and it is available online for streaming.

Occupied Cascadia seems to be to alert the public to an ongoing ecological disaster, and show a way out of this mess. *Occupied Cascadia* is a conventional documentary in its form –the narrative is driven forward by the voices of the people being interviewed, and the images function as a backdrop. The views of the people in the film include concerns of deep ecologists, social ecologists, and environmental pragmatists. I will divide them into positions based on these three categories, and include representatives of each of the positions. A range of people are invited to raise their opinions, at least three are from what the film refers to as the Deep Green Resistance Movement,¹⁷⁸ and five represent native organizations and communities in the Pacific Northwest. Eighteen people make up the “text.” I have included half of them, and their interpretation of place is at the forefront of this chapter.

This concern with the ideas of the subjects of the film does not mean images are not important; the central theme of the film is place, and the images of places in the film itself also form a “text” to be read, they are part of the rhetoric of the film. Any analysis of a film must look at what images are flickering over the screen. The film emphasizes certain regional features of the Pacific Northwest, such as water, trees, and salmon. The images used can have a moving effect on the audience. Images of sea creatures drenched in oil combined with slightly sentimental cello music could make any viewer feel sad – I know I do, the way the music sounds like it is striving for passion and earnestness in the listener. However, it comes across one-dimensional and “safe,” which often describes the imagery in and the construction of the film as well, suggesting a lack of artistic ideas and a lack of fresh perspective.

We see beautiful images of Cascadian natural areas, juxtaposed with pictures that show protesters, along with images of urban and rural environmental degradation, such as logging. The film opens with a grey-haired man sitting on the ground. We see cars with blinking lights parked in a street; a big sky over water; murals with people; people dancing on the grass; and two boys who are playing chess. We see more cars, this time speeding along I-5 with the Seattle skyline in the background. A parked bike is in front of another mural. We see protesters in the streets; a girl holds a poster that says “LET US EAT REAL FOOD.” A young man with no shoes stands under a large tree. Another man stands by a big black rock with his back to the camera, the wind blowing through his hair, while he looks out on what is ostensibly the Pacific Ocean, mountains rising in the background. The resemblance to Caspar David Friedrich’s painting of the sublime wilderness, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818)

¹⁷⁸ DGR is a radical environmentalist movement inspired by deep ecology. They see industrialism as the root cause of environmental degradation.

is striking, except for the sea of clouds, which here is a real ocean. People are dancing to the beat of drummers. We see the results of clear-cutting; a running creek; and factory pipes with thick, dark smoke.

We hear a voice-over in which Charles Eisenstein, author of the book *Sacred Economies* (2011,) reads a monologue, first asking what he sees as the two basic questions that all cultures have and that humanity struggles with: “Who are you?” and “What is the purpose of life?” He suggests answers to the question “Who are you?” that range from religion to economics to science. Eisenstein argues that we all agree on the idea of a “separate self.” This could be a soul, consciousness, a collocation of atoms, an economic man, etc. He says religion, economics, and science all agree what a person is. Then he expresses a view coming from other cultures – that you are a totality of your relationships. He sides with the “other cultures” by telling us that the separate self is a myth based on the logic of separation, separation of body and mind, and separation of the self from the universe. This separation infers that what happens to one human or animal does *not* matter to another human. He mentions the Fukushima disaster and the Gulf of Mexico oil spill as examples of catastrophes our logic says we can escape, because we can get our food from other places.

The photographic images that go along with his references to international environmental and humanitarian catastrophes are from the places mentioned, or are images of global corporations which can be seen as the source of destruction. Eisenstein mentions children in Haiti eating dirt because they are hungry, and we see a trashcan full of garbage, most of it paper cups from Seattle-based Starbucks. The jump from the very local to the global emphasizes the global character of environmental problems. The impacts are global, and they do not necessarily correspond with whom or what created the problem in the first place. Eisenstein then argues that our hearts disagree with the logic of separation, that it contradicts our felt experience. Then he introduces “the new story of the self.” He calls it the connected self, in which what happens to the forests and the whales *hurts*. This hurts, says Charles Eisenstein, because these things are happening to “me.” Eisenstein’s monologue connects man and his “new self” to nature, and grounds him in place and in connection to other species. Eisenstein here repeats the classic distinction between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. Arne Næss proposed the ecocentric idea that if we are part of nature, then hurting nature is like hurting ourselves, and vice versa. Næss calls this self-realization.¹⁷⁹ This

¹⁷⁹ Arne Næss, Bill Devall, and Alan Drengson, *Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2008). 81-96.

positions Eisenstein as one of the deep ecologists in the film. It implies a lesson from ecology, which is that we are all interconnected, we are all in one boat, and the dichotomy of man and nature is thrown overboard.

The juxtaposition of humans, natural environments, and images of people interacting with nature supports the message of the monologue. Several of the interviews take place in outdoor locations, such as under a tree, in a field, or by a creek. The film situates itself in the Pacific Northwest by showing local landmarks, as well as typical hippie markers such as no shoes, murals, and drums. It is very clear when looking at the images that we are not in Boston or New York, we are in the Pacific Northwest, and we are in a specific culture.

The film suggests we are entering a new time and a new story, where our relationship to place must change. This new relationship requires a new ecological logic, where man is connected to nature and the bioregion. Eisenstein's opening monologue stands in contrast to the critique raised by author of *Endgame*, environmental activist Derrick Jensen. Jensen's anti-urban critique becomes paradoxical, because while Eisenstein sees man as entrenched in nature, Jensen emphasizes borders. Jensen argues that the growth of villages into cities caused the environmental crisis.

Bioregionalism is the only way of living that can ever be sustainable. In *Endgame* I talk about how civilization is not and can never be sustainable. I then define civilization as a way of life characterized by the growth of cities, and define a city as people living in numbers large enough to require the importation of resources.¹⁸⁰

Jensen says that the problem lies in the importation of resources, which is why we should all live in villages. Violence is implicit in industrial capitalism and economy, according to Jensen, because a system that is set up to exploit the world turns communities into dead commodities. Jensen seems to see environmental degradation as caused by methods of production and industrialization. Jensen criticizes what he refers to as the "mainstream" for not asking the right questions. He blames mainstream environmentalism for treating ecology as a smaller division of the economy, and argues that this has resulted in disaster. He criticizes Lester Brown, the founder of the World Watch Institute, Peter Montague, executive director of Environmental Research Foundation, environmentalist, writer and co-founder of

¹⁸⁰ Mel Sweet and Devin Hess, "Occupied Cascadia," (<http://cascadiamatters.org/2012/occupied-cascadia2012>). 00:29.

350.org Bill McKibben, and former United States Vice President Al Gore, known to the environmental movement for the film *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006).

Bioregionalism favors local, grass-roots, anarchistic or decentralized efforts over national scientific management and technocratic experts, and this thesis clearly sees the usefulness of bioregionalism as an approach to solve environmental problems. Unfortunately, posing it as the only solution, as Jensen does, closes the debate instead of opening it. The anti-urban, anti-civilization tendencies found with some of the more deep ecology-oriented people interviewed in the film are some of the least useful ways to talk about place, because it does not widen what constitutes a place, but narrows it down.

Portland native Alexander Baretich, declared bioregionalist, teacher, and designer of the Doug Flag, portrays Cascadia as the edge of civilization and the endpoint of an escape. He does not point to cities as the root cause, but seems to express a more conflicting view, where cities are part of the problem and the departure-point for an escape.

This region has this symbolism of being the edge of civilization, that final last stand of trees, of old growth trees, and saying basically: no, we will not have that last stand cut. It is in some sense, maybe that, maybe that's the really good way of defining Cascadia, in the end its defiance. It is that struggle against what we have been escaping from. I mean, if you look at the pioneer diaries, the journals of the pioneers that came here, a lot of them talked about just the beauty of this place, and how they were escaping, you know civilization. Cascadia in some sense is an escape from civilization, and civilization not being something as...we always think of civilization as something being, like, being nice, but it's also dirty, it's also totally against nature, not to say that Cascadians are not city-based people, some of them are, but even how we look at our cities is completely different.¹⁸¹

The film exemplifies the troubles with some forms of bioregionalism as expressions of anti-urban thought. Derrick Jensen represents an anti-urban tradition, in which withdrawal from civilization into the wilderness is the main strategy for coping with the ills of modernity. This is overstressing the differences between nature and civilization, creating a duality. Jensen is paradoxically emphasizing the same border or duality that many of the main voices in environmental humanities are trying to break down. As shown in chapter 2.4, ecocritic Greg Garrard proposes bioregionalism as an answer to the false dualism between city and countryside, because it does not depend on a rejection of urbanism. Instead, the two are

¹⁸¹ Ibid.00:51.

mutually dependent.¹⁸² This thesis sees bioregionalism as an argument for the idea that no place is the place of the *other*, or that cities are artificial. Every place is a home place to be reinhabited. It does not need to be unspoiled wilderness. In fact, as shown in chapter 1.2, according to both Yi-Fu Tuan and William Cronon, there is no such thing. Wilderness is mankind's creation which reproduce the dualistic vision of humanity and nature. Reinhabitation means reclaiming something that has been degraded and filling it with meaning, either on urban or rural land.

An important way the people in the film constitute place is by discovering how they see their bioregion in comparison to other parts of the continent. From a national perspective, the Pacific Northwest has played the role of a hinterland. However, from Alexander Baretich's perspective, the east can sometimes be synonymous with Europe.

Europeans and Americans, meaning people on the east coast or Midwest, you know, when they look at stories like Little Red Riding hood, or Hansel and Gretel, the forest is always seen as a place that is scary. You know, Sleepy Hollow, for the American iconography, the big bad wolf, nature is something that they are running from.¹⁸³

Alexander Baretich's statements in the film are an example of the rhetoric of Ecotopian Exceptionalism that confirms the idea that exceptionalism really is living in Cascadia.

Yet is *Occupied Cascadia* in fact exceptional? Dillon Thompson is a Deep Green Resistance organizer who shows an emotional attachment to the region. He sees the region as a spiritual landscape, but does not indicate it is superior to other places. It is clear that Cascadia has a special feeling to him:

You know, all it took was a couple of trips outside the Pacific Northwest, for me to realize that this place has a lot of beauty. And, the land here kind of forces you to pay attention to it. And, you know, there's something, there's always been something about the air...to me here. It's just unlike any other air...that I ever breathed.¹⁸⁴

Is this exceptionalism different or better than American nationalist exceptionalism because it comes from a "good" place, where the goal is to protect "God's sanctuary," a place where the people themselves can organize their lives and communities through reinhabitation, rather

¹⁸² Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. 127-128.

¹⁸³ Sweet and Hess, "Occupied Cascadia." 00:53.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 00:52.

than a place of power or privilege? Americans are often understood to see their own nation as superior, and are known to be patriotic. The Cascadians in the movie are patriotic, but not about the American nation, but the Cascadian one. Baretich describes the region as oppositional to whatever is east of it. When he says “Americans,” he means people east of Cascadia or the Pacific Northwest. Baretich suggest people living on the West Coast must then be Cascadians, since they are not Americans. Bioregionalism thus becomes a political identity.

Writer and radical environmentalist Lierre Keith is concerned with bioregionalism as scale more than political identity, and as a way to overcome the limits of the nation state, saying, “This country is way too big. We’re never gonna have real democratic decision-making in a country that’s got 300 million people. It’s gotta be smaller.”¹⁸⁵ Keith follows up by describing what she makes out to be a good scale for organization.

If people really do care about things like freedom and democracy, that can only happen on a local and regional level. So the only way people are gonna experience that and make that real in their lives is by taking control again of the local and the regional, sort of that scale of human arrangement.¹⁸⁶

Both Keith and Peter Michael Bauer, Executive Director of Rewild Portland, launch a critique of the nation. Bauer warns against the dangers of nation state identity or nationalism, which he sees as fictional. Keith and Bauer both seem worried about losing a connection to the land itself, and this concern makes them question democracy and the nation-state.

One of the ways that civilization maintains its control over people, is by removing us from our understanding of our connectedness of the bioregion, and making us instead connect with the idea of the state or nationalism. And what that does is it takes us out of physical reality and gives us more or less a fictional story to live in instead of the physical reality. And bioregionalism is a way of...kind of destroying that nationalist myth and bringing us back to the land, and making us understand what it actually means to live on the planet.¹⁸⁷

Bauer’s comment on “a fictional story” can imply that the state is artificial. Derrick Jensen makes a distinction of being an occupier and an inhabitator, which corresponds with the logic of reinhabitation, a ground pillar of bioregionalism. In Peter Berg’s words, reinhabitation

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 00:17.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 00:27.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 00:43.

“involves applying for membership in a biotic community and ceasing to be its exploiter.”¹⁸⁸
This quote from Jensen echoes Berg’s concept of reinhabitation: “Being occupied and being occupiers as opposed to inhibitors is so deeply entrenched it goes to our very epistemology.”¹⁸⁹

A section of the film tries to get to questions of mythology. Narratives of imaginative power have created the bioregion of Cascadia and other bioregions. By emphasizing the importance of stories and myths, the film and the people in the film are hoping to create new stories and new myths with which they can replace the old ones. While myths cannot be fabricated and sent out into the world, the myth of Ecotopia has helped keep the idea of Cascadia alive. The first section in the film opens with one of the filmmakers asking Lierre Keith when she first heard about Cascadia.

I read Ecotopia (...) I think that the idea was really thrilling. (...) I think that stories are really important. We are story-telling creatures. And until somebody gives you the narrative - it’s really hard for most of us to live it. But having the story out there, that a group of people actually did this...I just found that really, it just broke a whole bunch of things open for me.¹⁹⁰

Keith is here explicitly making a connection between the novel *Ecotopia* and Cascadia, while explaining how the story of an ecological utopia was important for her. She is making a point, similar to Lawrence Buell’s idea, that stories can challenge modern-day society, and a lack of stories makes it tough to attempt to imagine a different kind of world. Both Keith’s and Buell’s view value ideas like the bioregion of Cascadia. So what are some of the new stories that this film tells? John Rampanen of the Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, represents the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Food Network (VICCIFN). He shares a story that works as a very clear allusion to why it is important for people to be aware of what is happening in their communities, develop a local knowledge and be grounded in place.

A common thread in the stories is being rooted to the land as a form of protection from these floods that are about to occur. So what would happen in many of these stories is large groups of people would gather in canoes, and they would create

¹⁸⁸ Berg, "Reinhabiting California." 399.

¹⁸⁹ Sweet and Hess, "Occupied Cascadia." 00:40.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.00:10.

this, with the strongest fibers they would create a rope to anchor themselves to the territory, to the land. And in some cases there was specific trees or landmarks, and the waters would rise, and because they were anchored and connected to the land after the waters receded, they would still be able to survive, adapt and learn from that experience and life would continue on. And so of course today our way of life has drastically been altered and it's easy to draw that same analogy to our culture and this devastating wave of colonialism that has impacted our people. And many of our people our culture, our identity, our language, our spiritually, our foods, the animals and other living beings that share this environment with us have felt the repercussions of this wave of colonialism that has swept over our lands and has wreaked havoc, and has transformed and altered it forever.

Rampanen ties environmental problems to other forms of oppression, such as colonialism. Social ecology points out that there can never be a solution to environmental problems in a society with social inequality, or more specifically, social hierarchy. When we seek to dominate and manipulate other humans, this translates to our relationship with the nonhuman world. This view sees environmental issues as part of social problems and resembles the environmental justice movement, a movement that sees environmental problems as interrelated with social, racial and economic issues.

Edward Casey has written, "To be cultural, to have a culture, is to inhabit a place sufficiently intensely to cultivate it – to be responsible for it, to respond to it, to attend to it caringly."¹⁹¹ Cascadia can function as a battlefield over what should be the culture of this place, and this film is a cultural and political reaction to a set of problems. For the people in the film, Cascadian culture is based on bioregional values, such as identifying with a certain biotic community. The film *Occupied Cascadia* sets up an ethical conflict between the "mainstream" and "other cultures" of resistance. In Rampanen's case, the solution lies in protection through reinhabitation and adaptation to place over time. This discourse of reinhabitation is both portrayed as a version of the good life and as a critique of mainstream environmentalism in the film. The discourse of reinhabitation in the bioregional imagination maintains that you become a better inhabitant of earth through living locally, in Berg and Dasmann's words; – living-in-place.¹⁹²

Tuan talks about this exchange in examples of "Mythical Space" and place. "The idea here stresses how human behavior can influence nature, but the converse is also believed to occur."¹⁹³ So how does reinhabitation become a public question outside these communities of

¹⁹¹ Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place." 34.

¹⁹² Berg, "Reinhabiting California." 399.

¹⁹³ Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* 97.

resistance? It becomes a shared culture through communal movements like the people we meet in the film, as well as through our imagination, through political and cultural expressions such as documentary film. The outcome can be that this response can develop into a strengthening of the public sphere, a strengthening of communities. The film has a limited audience due to questions of funding, the quality of the film, and a lack of distribution. The question remains if the message has a potential big audience and can become a public question.

One of the main ways in which the people in the film constitute place is by discovering what they see as the major challenges of their bioregion. Yet what they see as the problem is contested. Writer Lierre Keith demonstrates the issues at stake here, and constitutes place in relation to what she sees as a crucial issue.

All of your necessities have got to come from the place in which you live. And right away, you know, why can't we be supported by the places that we live? It's because they have been destroyed. I mean there should be millions of salmon in these rivers and there's none really. They are almost all gone. Same with the ocean. I mean here we are, a mile away from the ocean. Why are the oceans empty? They are empty.(...) So if you try to live from the place in which you are situated you start to see it's been destroyed and it's still being destroyed.

What is important to have in mind is that there is no such thing as one bioregionalism. It has no leaders, there is no official ideology, and it is a bottom-up, decentralized, anarchistic, and sometimes pragmatic initiative. It is a constant struggle between the anthropocentric and the ecocentric concerns, the pragmatic aspects versus the more principled ones, like the Deep Green Resistance Movement represented by Derrick Jensen and Lierre Keith. The film shows a pluralist movement, and this can be a strength. In Lawrence Buell's words, they do not speak the same language: "Not all resistances in the name of place speak the same language, however. Some are individualistic and proprietarian, others are communalistic. Some are intensely local, others self-conscious of belonging in (and/against) national and even transnational networks."¹⁹⁴

Steven Hawley is a fishing journalist, and the author of *Recovering a Lost River* (2012), a book about dam removals and rewilding rivers with salmon. He mentions how very different movements make up the responses to this crisis. His comment seem more concerned

¹⁹⁴ Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World : Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. And Beyond*. 59.

with practical and pragmatic responses to the devastation, in line with the bioregional tradition of being democratic, sustainable and open to diverse solutions.

We are in the midst of a crisis and people are responding in unprecedented ways because the crisis we are up against is unprecedented. And so I think you'll continue to see these innovative and creative alignments of movements that up until now haven't spent a lot of time talking to one another or planning with one another.¹⁹⁵

Jeannette Armstrong of the Okanagan people in British Columbia, Canada, is the Executive Director of a non-profit First Nations educational organization, the En'owkin Centre. She sees the disappearance of the quality of being indigenous, *indigeneity*, as a key matter. In a postcolonial, bioregional perspective like Armstrong's, the key issue is the threat to place-based knowledge. Bioregionalism offers tools to recover indigeneity, because it emphasizes place-based knowledge and practices. This places Armstrong in the environmental pragmatic tradition, because place and local practices comes first, and principles come later.

The main issue that we are concerned with here in En'owkin Centre is to find a way to recover our indigeneity, for the Salish people, the Okanaganess person. And I think one of the focuses and approaches we are taking is to take it outside the arena of politics for instance, political structures, that also means taking it out of the ethnicity and race constructs that are implicit in that.(...) For instance my right to indigeneity, what does that mean? If we take it outside of that racist construct and that political construct then we are left with the idea that it must be a way of living and must be a way of doing things, it must be a way of valuing and organizing around that kind of valuing related to a place.¹⁹⁶ (...) If you are looking at it purely from other living things on the earth...if you are going to say: those animals are indigenous, or those birds are indigenous, what does that actually mean? It has nothing to do with politics or boundaries or the US or Canada or even the United Nations, right? That indigeneity has to do with the way those creatures have adapted to all the conditions in that particular place...that they are indigenous to. So climate, terrain, topography, all the other life forms that are there, all are things that they have adapted to and figured out a way to be interdependent with. So if we take that idea and we look at the human being, clearly indigeneity will have a whole different meaning and a whole different construct.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Sweet and Hess, "Occupied Cascadia." 01:38.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 01:17.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 01:19.

The film does well in avoiding a common trap of appropriating native culture. Native Americans and First Nations are not referred to as “natural peoples” from whom we can learn a lot from; instead people of the native cultures and First Nations share their diverse perspectives and knowledge, grounding the film in particular places. In not just referring to people of power or privilege, but including a range of people, with local knowledge and from different backgrounds, the film shows contested views. There is no one view of place here. The people are widely discrepant in their comments, as is bioregionalism.

Lierre Keith and Derrick Jensen talk about what they see as a collapse of the United States, which they see as inevitable and foreseeable because history shows that empires do not last. Jensen compares the upcoming collapse to that of the Soviet Union, suggesting the state will not be able to deliver mail or keep roads open. Bobbie Connor, Director of Tamástlikt Cultural Institute outside Pendleton, Oregon, does not see this collapse or revolution as something happening in the near future, but something that will take three or four generations. She says indigenous cultures have been worried about this for quite a while. She says that her generation cannot drink water from the streams, as they could before, and that food is not safe to eat anymore because of radiation from nuclear plants located near or on reservations. She talks about a flood, a wave that is over us, a sleeping giant that will wake up and shake. “The people who came here thought that man knew best. Not taking teachings from other species about how to live here...there’s a huge danger in that.”¹⁹⁸

These apocalyptic doomsday elements in the film seem deterministic, as if we are predestined, just waiting for Mother Nature to act. In this case, deep ecology and modern science of ecology disagree, because deep ecologists, here represented by Bobbie Conner, say that nature knows best and nature is too complex for humans to really understand. There is not much faith in human power left in this quote: “We are not in charge. We are handmaidens. We can be handmaidens of destruction. We can be part of the salvation, but I wouldn’t want to rob the prerogative from the living earth, as if I had that knowledge, I don’t. I think that’s foolish.”¹⁹⁹ Whereas other people in the film seem to have strong belief in the collective effort of human cultures, some like Bobbie Conner hold a more fatalistic standpoint. The deep ecology movement can sometimes give the impression that Mother Earth is in a bad mood and humans are her servants. Human agency is lost, we are subordinate, and it’s up to Mother Nature. This kind of biocentric polemic talk lacks

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 00:45.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 01:09.

humanism, and is bioregionalism at its least democratic and pragmatic. This is one of the pitfalls of bioregional thinking that I brought up in chapter two, and in this regard the interview with Connor places the film too far to the side of radical environmentalism to be regarded as a bioregional contribution.

5.3 Bioregionalism and the Good Life

The idea of repairing the broken relationship between human and nature through reinhabitation and restoration implies that society is sick and in need of a cure. *Occupied Cascadia* proposes reinhabitation as a cure against our estrangement from the land. Modernity has created a nature/culture division, and bioregionalism offers a way to bridge this gap. The medicine is to live locally and deliberately with the land, to repair damage and degradation. “Nature is but another name for health,”²⁰⁰ wrote Henry David Thoreau in his journals, a message the film communicates. Bioregionalist Alexander Baretich expresses these ideas clearly when interviewed in the film.

People who came here, tend to run to nature. Nature is salvation, nature is that last refuge. It is God’s sanctuary that we are trying to get into. Being in nature is our rejuvenation, removing those scars of civilization itself.²⁰¹

A theme of the film is that in this Ecotopian Eden, you can be rejuvenated or even healed. For environmental advocates who work politically through Non-Governmental Organizations, this point might sound a bit New Age-like or hippie. It could, however, be the strength of the movie, and possibly offers some personal benefits to struggling environmentalists. Who does not want salvation and rejuvenation?

In *The Dream of the Earth* (1988), cultural historian Thomas Berry proposes six functions that describe bioregional living. One of these is “self-healing.”²⁰² If civilization gives us scars, and nature can heal these scars and bring salvation, self-healing can be the sixth function of bioregionalism. The bioregion is proposed as the place of spiritual importance and a place where community happens.²⁰³ It is through a submission to the community that this healing is supposed to happen. It is unclear if the healing is a force of nature or a force of the sum of people, the community. Berry writes that the community

²⁰⁰ Henry D. Thoreau, *The Heart of Thoreau's Journals*(New York: Dover, 1961). 119.

²⁰¹ Sweet and Hess, "Occupied Cascadia." 00:54

²⁰² Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*(San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990). 166-168.

²⁰³ Ibid. 166.

“carries within itself” energies that can nourish and renew.²⁰⁴ In order to be healed, the people must acknowledge and believe in these restorative energies. Berry argues that bioregional communities at best can mean a “change from an exploitive anthropocentrism to a participative biocentrism.”²⁰⁵ To Berry, this means something beyond mainstream environmentalism, which to him is embedded in the Anthropocene. Deep Green Resistance organizer Max Wilbert perceives Cascadia as a very wild place with more wildlife than the east. He seems to believe that some of the power of the animals influences the human culture in Cascadia.

I think we have higher regard, in this area, for the forest and for the salmon, for the grizzly bears. And that’s because we still have population of wild salmon, unlike the east coast we still have grizzly bears, we still have cougars, which are gone from half the continent, and we still have some old-growth forest. And so, I think that has...the fact, the existence of these creatures, these other beings has...they are powerful. They are full of spirit and power and I think some of that has leaked out into the culture here. And its only around the edges.²⁰⁶

Wilbert proposes there is a leak of spirituality from the wildlife of the region to the humans. It makes me think of Thomas Berry’s suggestion that “A degraded habitat will produce degraded humans. An enhanced habitat supports an elevated mode of the human.”²⁰⁷ He has a seemingly straightforward answer to this: “The solution is simply for us as humans to join the earth community as participating members, to foster the progress and prosperity of the bioregional communities to which we belong.”²⁰⁸ Maybe the reason why bioregionalism continues to have a cultural impact in the American West is its positive orientation and emphasis on the local sense of place as a positive impact on both the land and the self. Even though bioregionalism works on a communal, regional, scale, the ideas behind it are both philosophical and practical.

The film offers few practical solutions to the environmental problems of our time. Reinhabitation and bioregional thoughts are valuable because they bind the individual personal level and the communal level. In addition, the idea in itself, ecology, is something positive. Moreover, reinhabitation is a mindset that allows you to do change yourself; it

²⁰⁴ Ibid. 168.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 169.

²⁰⁶ Sweet and Hess, "Occupied Cascadia." 00:54.

²⁰⁷ Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*. 165.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 166.

becomes a practical guide to self re-creation. Therefore, in a way it is narcissistic, because it is about improvement of the self as well as a place. Maybe environmentalism needs this in order to become a larger movement. Bioregionalism and reinhabitation have a good selling point that mainstream environmentalism could use: self-improvement through better environmental choices. We cannot expect people to make choices that feel like sacrifices, it needs to feel like self-help, healing, fulfillment, or whatever. That is the key to why this is a useful critique of environmentalism. We are all hypocrites and failures, and need to accept that. Striving for voluntary simplicity or communal ecology is hard if it is based on guilt. It needs to be based on something positive, not anxiety and fear. You cannot tell people to change their values. However, you can show it through actions that you perform after having changed your own mindset. Reinhabitation is a way to show an alternative discourse of the good life. It is a critique of modernism and the ideals of growth as progress. This discourse of reinhabitation as a version of the good life, and as a critique of mainstream environmentalism, is evident throughout the film. This makes it useful in contributing to the theory of the practice of imagining space in activating environmental concern.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter started by asking how we imagine places, and what bioregionalism can contribute to the developing of space a theory of space and a practice of space. All of the people interviewed in the film express a strong sense of place, meaning having a strong interest in the place that they live or encounter. This is a goal of bioregionalism. Edward Relph believes a sense of place to be instinctive, but also something we need to practice: “A strong sense of place appears to be partly instinctive but can also be learned and enhanced through the careful practice of comparative observation and appreciation for makes places distinctive.”²⁰⁹ In this way, the film helps spread the appreciation for place, and proposes the idea of reinhabitation. Through practicing knowledge and appreciation you develop a sense of place.

The film is not successful as a response to the critique of bioregionalism’s inclination towards the countryside. I do not expect a film to solve this tension between the rural and pastoral versus urban polarity, but some of the interviewees are doing their share to keeping the urban-rural dichotomy in bioregionalism alive. In chapter four, I argued that place, and

²⁰⁹ Relph, "A Pragmatic Sense of Place." 27.

ecological utopias such as Cascadia, have a role to play in environmental thinking because of their transformational power and because of bioregionalism's pragmatic aspects. The film works best when it opens up and shows what a bioregion can be and sees possibilities for reinhabitation, and works the least when it narrows it down to rural areas.

The film does not portray Cascadia as a model or blueprint for others to follow. Every region needs to use the knowledge and local initiative to find local solutions. This is crucial. However, the film does not show any pragmatic solutions, but concentrates on environmental philosophy. For bioregionalism to be useful, it should be pluralist and democratic, argues Kelvin J. Booth. He stresses that people should not suggest bioregionalism as a panacea for all ills or as the principle mode for shaping an identity. That is why Jensen's statement "Bioregionalism is the only way of living that can ever be sustainable" is problematic.²¹⁰ Bioregionalism is one way to live sustainable, it is a perspective that has been around since the 1960s and it is a useful way to think about place and our planet.

This thesis is not looking to agree on one root cause of our environmental problems, but looks for useful solutions to get out of the trouble we are in. The film shows mixed perspectives that include those of deep ecology, social ecology, and pragmatic environmentalism. Bioregionalism tries to incorporate the ecocentrism with some anthropocentric concerns that are more pragmatic, and this makes it useful for environmentalism. The film works best when it manages to combine both the ecocentric and the pragmatic views.

According to Carl Abbott, the difference between Callenbach's *Ecotopia* and the vision of Cascadia is that Cascadia "argues for a revolution in production — or nonproduction — rather than changes in consumption."²¹¹ In this regard, the film is an example of the critique moving from *Ecotopia*'s advocacy of reduction in growth and consumption towards a discourse of alternative production. The film displays a critique of loss of place, industrial capitalism, and the separation of man and nature. Without these bold statements, the film has limited qualities. It is principally a vessel for bioregionalists to exchange ideas through, with pretty pictures of nature, sad pictures of environmental decay, and sentimental music on top. As a medium, it serves an important role through which activists, scholars, and others voice their opinions and share ideas.

²¹⁰ Sweet and Hess, "Occupied Cascadia."00:29.

²¹¹ Abbott, "Competing Cascadias: Imagining a Region over Four Decades ". 11.

The Cascadian discourse represented by Baretich and Wilbert might be exceptionalist, and it is clearly emotional. Nevertheless, it is useful, because it shows how their regional identity is built on environmentalism and a sense of place. This can inspire to bioregionalist thought which can bring about political action that in turn will make the region more sustainable, and because it can encourage other people in other places. It can become dangerous if it becomes exclusive and territorial. Developing a sense of place is not just something for your home place – it should be an awakening applicable to anywhere you go.

6 Cascadian Black Metal as Placemaking

6.1 Introduction

Ecocriticism, an important academic discourse generated by the example of the environmental movement, has been challenged to move beyond its base in Anglophone literature and other “realistic” genres like nature writing, because it can (or has) become elitist, limiting, and passé. Lawrence Buell has argued that bioregionalism and reinhabitation could serve a function in developing a broader message, if bioregionalism could reach a large audience beyond the circle of faithful bioregionalists. Could an offshoot of a popular musical form with a bad reputation be an important agent for reaching that broad audience?

Metal, or its black metal subgenre, is known as music your parents hate. But a less well-known offshoot, Cascadian black metal, could be understood as an example of an art form that identifies as a part of the cultural milieu and a movement that reinforces ideas of the bioregion of Cascadia. To the bands *Wolves in the Throne Room*, *Velvet Cocoon*, and *Echtra*, place matters. This chapter examines how the fringe cultures of Cascadian black metal inspire and are inspired by bioregional thought, and how the bands imagine and create representations of place. Do the ecological principles found in bioregionalism overlap with those of a selection of bands that identify as Cascadian black metal? What is the eco-philosophical discourse in Cascadian black metal? What does the region and its natural setting mean to these three bands?

6.2 The Potential of Popular Music to Initiate Change

Not much has been written about popular music ecocritically, but David Ingram’s book *The Jukebox in the Garden* (2012) is one exception. Ingram says that while music that brings up ecology can be received as catered to a narrow audience, it can also be imaginative and inspirational. Its utopian value lies in its position to build “group solidarity and identity, and in providing hope.”²¹² Ingram discusses whether “music is a form of utopian expression that

²¹² Ingram, *The Jukebox in the Garden : Ecocriticism and American Popular Music since 1960*. 241.

prefigures a better society in the future, including a healed relationship between human beings and the natural world.”²¹³ Ingram sets up an argument, backed by sociology, cultural studies, and musicology, that popular music has a utopian power of hope.²¹⁴ Ernst Bloch and Theodor Adorno both saw music as a utopian art appealing to the senses and possibly bringing about change. In Chapter four, I used Ruth Levitas’ reading of Bloch to show the potential of ecological utopias. For Bloch, utopianism “is a way of expressing the experience of lack, of dissatisfaction, of ‘something’s missing’, in the actuality of human existence.”²¹⁵ Cascadian black metal may be understood as a utopian expression of the longing for change, which in itself is valuable because we need to imagine environmental change in order to carry it out. In an interview with the music blog *Pitchforkmedia*, Wolves in the Throne Room explain that for them, “Art, such as Black Metal, explores the potential futures we could manifest.”²¹⁶

6.3 The Eco-Aesthetics of Music

Many genres of popular music have expressed concern for the deterioration of the environment. The eco-aesthetics of pop music comes in many forms, and Cascadian Black Metal is just the newest example of this concern. In the 1960s and ’70s, artist Joni Mitchell sang, “They paved paradise / And put up a parking lot” in her song “Yellow Taxi.” Marvin Gaye asked, referring to Mother Earth, “How much more abuse from man can she stand?” in the song “Mercy, Mercy Me (Ecology).” Californian bands like The Doors and Grateful Dead sang about the destruction of the planet. “What have they done to the earth?” asked The Doors in the song “When the Music’s Over” from 1967. In 1996, Michael Jackson asked the same question at the Brit Awards 1996 performing his song “Earth Song.”²¹⁷ He saw his own generation as part of the problem. The show starts with a spinning globe. We see images of the rainforests, wild animals, African children, and factory pipes with what seems like polluting smoke. The stage is filled up with peoples of all races, dressed in scraps. The destitute looking people turn into a choir, the earth goes up in flames and Jackson changes into a white gown, his arms stretched out, with the children flocking around him as if he is Jesus Christ. This song is one of popular music’s most famous responses to the environmental crisis, but the performance seems over the top and proselytizing.

²¹³ Ibid. 15.

²¹⁴ Ibid.40-43.

²¹⁵ Levitas, "For Utopia: The (Limits of the) Utopian Function in Late Capitalist Society." 27.

²¹⁶ Brandon Stosuy, "Show No Mercy," <http://pitchfork.com/features/show-no-mercy/7668-show-no-mercy/>.

²¹⁷ YouTube, "Michael Jackson - Earth Song (Brit Awards 1996) " YouTube, LLC.

According to Ingram, music as an art form can fall into a trap of “didacticism.” There are many examples of overly didactic rock music. U2, Sting, and Michael Jackson are all known for mixing their music with a political message, and have been both praised and criticized for it. Ingram writes that musicians “are encouraging their audience to connect emotionally with the natural world in a way that may lead to environmental awareness and action.”²¹⁸ As for Michael Jackson’s performance of “Earth Song,” Ingram mentions it as a good example of troubling eco-aesthetics. The problem of didacticism and popular music arises when music starts making moral claims and tries to teach us a lesson like the example with Michael Jackson’s song and video. This can in some cases become dogmatic and moralistic, consequently putting people off.

Cascadian black metal avoids this trap. Rock is not supposed to teach you anything – and this applies to black metal as well. If anything, rock music is a highly individualistic form of expression, and so is black metal. My argument is that Cascadian black metal avoids moralizing its claims because of its individualistic nature. The music that the Cascadian black metal bands create is part of a musical tradition that is very individualistic. I will let the Portland Oregon band Velvet Cacoon illustrate this point:

Music For Falling Buildings was our last message driven release. Since then, it has become a much more grand form of art which needs no literal message, only an audial message to be defined by the listener. The music we make is, as you said, a creative and artistic outlet which serves to quench my own desire to create and nothing more. What people gather from our music is of no concern to us.²¹⁹

This quote shows that the band is aware that they have been more literal in their environmental message in the past. They are trying harder to avoid becoming didactic. Cascadian black metal might be more successful in creating a Cascadian space outside of the music because it is less dogmatic than the Michael Jackson example, or the *Occupied Cascadia* film. Another way to avoid the effect of putting people off is through not publishing lyrics or screaming instead of singing, something these bands often do. In order to get a clear “environmental message” you have to actively seek out interviews with the bands. Wolves in the Throne Room show they are aware of the dangers of being too active in trying to convert others into the “faith” by distancing themselves from attempts to bring others into the fold.

²¹⁸ Ingram, *The Jukebox in the Garden : Ecocriticism and American Popular Music since 1960*. 234.

²¹⁹ J.B. Bauer, "Interview with Sgl of Velvet Cacoon," Full Moon Productions, <http://www.fmp666.com/velvetcacoon/vc.html>.

“In my youth, it was the fashion for punk bands to deliver sermons from the stage on one political issue or another. Such proselytizing is sort of a pathetic cliché at this point.”²²⁰

The music or lyrics do not suggest any answers, but raise very general critiques and celebrate a specific place. Music is such an individual experience, but can still contribute to political change because it expresses human emotions and is hopeful in its longing for a better society. The film *Occupied Cascadia* is more explicitly political, it is meant to stir up minds and push people to take action. It makes a connection with the Occupy movement, and has much more collective feel to it, despite its anarchistic message. Even though the film and the bands both make some radical statements, the music and its aesthetic live on despite whatever “message” comes from the bands.

6.4 Green is the New Black: Cascadian Black Metal

This chapter deals with a marginal musical “scene”²²¹ of the Pacific Northwest, Cascadian black metal and how the bands constitute place and an ethic of reinhabitation. Black metal as a musical style is inspired by heavy metal bands such as Black Sabbath, and by trash metal and extreme metal bands like Venom and Bathory.²²² Black metal started with a European wave in the 1980s. In the early 1990s, a controversial second wave of Norwegian black metal gained a worldwide reputation because of a few individuals’ violent actions, including church burnings and murder.²²³ The scene has been infamous for its extremism, anti-Christianity, violence, misanthropy, and association with satanic ideology. Themes and ideas important in black metal are nihilism, mysticism, and the apocalypse. The genre has been ridiculed for being a parody of itself, consisting of people wearing corpse paint and worshipping Satan. According to the Cascadian black metal band, Echtra, some years after this second wave, “the thematic palette of Black Metal expanded and, while a celebration of evil was still central, other notions began to hold sway, such as nature worship and pagan retribution. Black Metal had become green, and the forest became a ubiquitous motif.”²²⁴

²²⁰ SouthernLord, "Interview, Wolves in the Throne Room," Southern Lord, <http://www.southernlord.com/press/wolvesinthethroneroom/interview.php>.

²²¹ “Scene” is spatial concept and a theatrical metaphor suggesting a space with some action

²²² Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2007). 2.

²²³ Michael Moynihan and Didrik Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Feral House, 2003).

²²⁴ Echtra, "Echtra, Cascadia Black Metal, and the Mythopoesis of Earth: Bioregionalism as Spiritual Embodiment," CascadiaNow,

<http://static.squarespace.com/static/521b7c54e4b0e63c9a89da62/521b836ae4b0751bf500a01c/521b8420e4b0751bf500bfd9/1377535008063/?format=original>.

The American black metal scene²²⁵ has its roots in Norwegian black metal, but the genre makes a point of being different from the Norwegian and European style.²²⁶ Some of the bands have crossed over into a more open scene, getting coverage in *The New York Times*, and the attention of music journalists and fans outside the metal scene. Several bands draw inspiration from the Romantic era, William Blake, and the concept of the sublime.

Cascadian black metal, then, is a subgenre of American black metal, and an example of a fringe culture of nature-worshipping bands of the Pacific Northwest. It is a cultural phenomenon, especially particular to the American West. The Cascadian bands identify firstly with an imagined ecological region, and the bands are often associated with ecology, farming, and a nature-based occult worldview. Accordingly, the genre is sometimes referred to as “eco-metal.” I will use the terms Cascadian black metal and eco-metal interchangeably. Black metal is a highly fractured genre, and this thesis will look at what is considered to be the “left side”²²⁷ of black metal, i.e. Cascadian Black metal or eco-metal.²²⁸

Many bands identify themselves as “Cascadian.”²²⁹ The names of some of these bands include Walden, Boreal, and Fauna, names that bring up associations of the natural world.²³⁰ The label “Cascadian” can indicate an attachment to place.²³¹ The band Alda, for example, is referred to as a “collective project dedicated to the reclamation of Lost Wisdom, and the application of a lifestyle founded on respect and communication with the soils on which they dwell.”²³² I have selected three bands, two from Olympia, Washington, and one from Portland, Oregon, that identify themselves as bioregional, and in this process create place.

The band Wolves in the Throne Room from Olympia, WA, was formed in 2003, and is known for being both farmers and musicians. Mainstream media write-ups have helped create a bit of a “buzz” around the band, broadening the idea of Cascadia outside Cascadia

²²⁵ The scene includes bands such as Liturgy, Krallice, Nachtmystium, Von, Weakling, and Leviathan.

²²⁶ Hunter Hunt-Hendrix, "Trancendental Black Metal," in *Hideous Gnosis: Black Metal Theory Symposium 1*, ed. Nicola Masciandro(Charleston, S.C.: [S.n.], 2010). 54.

²²⁷ The flipside of eco-metal is National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) which is an example of place-attachment gone wrong.

²²⁸ Erik Davis, "Deep Eco-Metal," the Washington Post Company, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/music_box/2007/11/deep_ecometal.html.

²²⁹ Alda, Mania, Blood of the Black Owl, Gyibaaw, Skagos, Harrow, Leech, Addaura. Wolves in the Throne Room, Fauna, Echtra, Chasma, Threnos, and Velvet Cacoon are all from the Cascadian region.

²³⁰ Arguably, this tag does nothing more than suggest that these bands either originate from somewhere in the Cascade Mountain Range of the North-American West, or identify with, relate to, or sympathize with the idea of Cascadia. The tag might say more about the users of the webpage than the bands, but it shows that the term is in use.

²³¹ Last FM is a social media networking webpage for music, where users through a software program share what artists and bands they listen to on their computer. Users of LastFM can identify or «tag» music with labels such as «Black Metal» or «Cascadian Black Metal» and this “tag” has currently been applied to 70 different bands to describe them.

²³² LastFM, "Alda," LastFM, <http://www.last.fm/music/Alda>.

itself. On their record label Southern Lord's webpage, the band reluctantly admits to being part of the Cascadian black metal scene: "Cascadia is home to a deep underground of Black Metal, but little is known about it outside of our forests. I suppose we reside somewhere between these 'scenes', though the place where I am most at peace is on the farm tending to the simple things."²³³

The person behind the solo project Echtra, also from Olympia, seems more eager to identify with the scene. In a manifesto Echtra suggests that the term "Cascadian black metal" was first introduced after their performance during a night of rituals in Olympia. "For Echtra's first performance, on June 6th of 2003 at the seminal "Unburied" gathering, the project was billed as "Trance-Inducing Cascadian Black Metal"²³⁴

Velvet Cocoon from Portland, Oregon, was formed in 1996, and is a highly mystical band. They do not reveal their identities, and frequently play with myths surrounding the band.²³⁵ For musical inspiration, the band states to the music blog Full Moon Productions that they "walk through cold caves and the deep woods to gather our inspiration and formulate a concept of what we want to create with sounds."²³⁶

Black metal music is far from the popular music you hear on top 40 radio. In fact, they do not play black metal on radio much. Musically, the genre is known for its screaming vocals, fast drums and distorted guitars. Velvet Cocoon's music stretches from pieces that are ambient and atmospheric soundscapes, almost hypnotizing but still bordering on background music, to shorter, faster tracks with distorted guitars, manic drums and growling, beast-like vocals. On their track "Northsuite" you can hear crickets or birds in the background.

The 18-minute long atmospheric and dramatic song "I Will Lay Down My Bones Among the Rocks and Roots" from Wolves in the Throne Room's album *Two Hunters* (2007) exemplifies the theme of rebirth. The lyrics are spit out by a screaming male voice, on how the world is ending in a necessary apocalypse so it can be reborn. After the great fire comes the cleansing rain and the birds can again sing. In Rachel Carson's environmental classic *Silent Spring* (1962), the marine biologist, zoologist, and science writer uses the silence of the birds as a metaphor in her opening chapter "A Fable for Tomorrow." In her fictional fable, an

²³³ SouthernLord, "Interview, Wolves in the Throne Room".

²³⁴ Echtra, "Echtra, Cascadia Black Metal, and the Mythopoesis of Earth: Bioregionalism as Spiritual Embodiment".

²³⁵ I can therefore not guarantee that the person answering the question in this online-interview is even in the band. I choose to include this because the level of truth here is not as important as the image the band is trying to portray. It is problematic to write about them, but I am working with ideas and treating this as a text, not as a fact sheet.

²³⁶ Bauer, "Interview with Sgl of Velvet Cocoon".

“evil spell,” a “mysterious malady,” a “shadow of death,” and a “strange stillness” has “crept upon”²³⁷ the town, and the result is that the birds have gone quiet. They do not sing anymore. The Wolves in the Throne Room song “I Will Lay Down My Bones Among the Rocks and Roots,” is reminiscent of “A Fable for Tomorrow” when the birds fill the forest with its song after the world is born anew. The protagonist dreams of a better world, and when he wakes up next to the stream the world sings a different tune.

The torment has ended
the beast has done his work
Great fires rage outside of this wooded sanctuary

But soon they will be quenched by a purifying rain
the embers of the ceremonial fire burn to ash

A new warmth stirs within the center of the earth
I am alone here no more

The wood is filled with the sounds of wildness
The songs of birds fill the forest on this new morning
This will be my new home
Deep within the most sacred grove
the sun god is born anew

I will lay down my bones among the rocks and roots of the deepest
hollow next to the streambed
The quiet hum of the earth's dreaming is my new song

When I awake, the world will be born anew²³⁸

Musically, the piece is mostly melodic, with some use of dissonance, an arrangement of notes that sound disagreeable to most of us. This creates tension and the feeling that something is wrong. The music consists of melodic black metal with elements of the genres noise, ambient, and field recordings of birds. It sounds melancholic, and is full of contrasts with surprising elements. It is very dynamic and has a climactic buildup, but varies from being epically dramatic to more hypnotic and almost transcendent. The music is structured and sounds rehearsed, but the rhythms take unforeseen turns, and so do the vocals, which come and go.

²³⁷ Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (London, England: Penguin, 1962). 21.

²³⁸ Encyclopaedia Metallum, "The Metal Archives," Encyclopaedia Metallum http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Wolves_in_the_Throne_Room/Two_Hunters/156710.

The male vocals are intense and growling, but are replaced by a female voice at the end of the piece. The mood of the music is dark and full of despair, except for the birds singing in the end, suggesting a new day. The production sounds professional compared to the more rugged old school black metal it is inspired by. The drums are blasting beats, making use of a double pedal, creating a dramatic effect and a sense of urgency. The tremolo guitar, the blast beat drumming, and the growling vocals indicate that this is in fact black metal. In this quote from their label Southern Lord's webpage, Wolves in the Throne Room sum up what they would like the outcome of a listening experience to be. It is not far from what I hear in this particular piece.

Black Metal channels the mythic energies of apocalypse and destruction in order to work through these feelings of misanthropy, guilt and self-loathing. Like any meditative practice, Black Metal seeks to annihilate the ego in order to reach transcendent states of consciousness.²³⁹

Cascadian black metal is mystical, not pragmatic or practical; it is music as a utopian art engaging our senses. The themes revolve around how the world ends and is reborn. It also emphasizes the natural world and mankind as part of it. The lyrics are inspired by Romanticism in its violence and grand poetic statements. The way the protagonist lays down his bones and how "the quiet hum of the earth's dreaming is my new song" is reminiscent of Gary Snyder's point in his chapter on reinhabitation in *A Place in Space*. Snyder writes that the point of knowledge is not the "intriguing" and "special" understanding, but the "capacity to hear the song of the Gaia at that spot."²⁴⁰ The point that the "I" hears the humming of the world, shows a development of a certain ecological understanding and perhaps displays a feeling of gratitude, a sense of place. This understanding is part of what makes up reinhabitation. The song ends with a female voice singing, followed by the sounds of birds singing on what could be a new morning in a new world. Wolves in the Throne Room often use synthesizers, and the drumming is so fast it can almost sound machine-like. The music is heavy, haunting, and almost ritualistic. On newer recordings they make use of a female singer. Those not familiar with this style of music might find it hard to enjoy. The singing does not sound natural; the voices are melodramatic, extreme, and often hard to make out lyrically. This all makes for an unnatural sound. Wolves in the Throne Room were asked on

²³⁹ SouthernLord, "Interview, Wolves in the Throne Room".

²⁴⁰ Gary Snyder, *A Place in Space : Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds : New and Selected Prose*(Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1995). 190.

an online music blog about the unnatural sound of their music, and their answer can suggest that they see beyond naturalization and realize that no music is more real or natural than any other – they are all cultural artifacts:

Nothing about what we do is natural. From top to bottom, Black Metal relies on modern luxuries and space-age technology to exist and disseminate itself. One of the many contradictions of Black Metal is that it is a music that decries civilization, but relies on so many modern contrivances to exist. I don't think it is a natural sound at all. It is really the sound of paradox, ambiguity, confusion, being caught between two worlds that cannot be reconciled.²⁴¹

What then, does the band want the listeners to hear in their music? Through the blasting beats and shrieking vocals, there is a message, about angry nature. Wolves in the Throne Room express a hope that their music will inspire increased environmental knowledge.

If you listen to Black Metal, but you don't know what phase the moon is in, or what wild flowers are blooming then you have failed. It is shocking to me that one could be seriously interested in Black Metal and not be deeply committed to radical ecology. Is BM supposed to be about concrete high rises, suburbs, television, an easy modern existence with access to 4-tracks and corpse paint from the local Hot Topic? No! The music is about wild forests, unfettered rivers, nature: furious and vengeful.²⁴²

Bioregionalism wants us to reimagine and reinhabit the land mentally and physically by reassessing where we are. It seems as if Wolves in the Throne Room share this hope in creating narratives of destruction and rebirth. David Ingram's question about how music can raise ecological awareness comes to mind here. It is clear that the band hopes to inspire an ecological awareness through their musical place-creation.

On their newest release, *Celestial Lineage* (2011, Southern Lord), the photographer Alison Scarpulla creates a haunting, mystical landscape with her pictures spread across a double gatefold.²⁴³ She uses an analog technology film. The pictures show landscapes by Lake Cushman near the Olympic National Forest in Washington State, about one hour north of the band's hometown, Olympia. The images show parts of the Northern Pacific coastal forests, a temperate rainforest, typical to the Pacific Northwest. These forests are well known

²⁴¹ Bradley Smith, "Interview with Wolves in the Throne Room 2006," <http://www.nocturnalcult.com/WITTRint.htm>.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ The record cover folds out, there are pictures on the LP jackets and a picture on the back of the record. Gatefold means when an album contains more than one record; in this case there are two records in one.

for their great diversity of lichen and moss species. The trees in the images are covered in moss, which indicates a humid climate. Moss, which has been around since the age of the dinosaurs, suggests something primeval. The cover shows a moss-covered cave, glowing and enigmatic in the dark forest. It could be two or more pictures laid on top of each other. A cape covers or hides something that could be a human on all fours. Maybe this is what is left after the apocalypse? Or it could be a hidden gem? It could be either dead or alive, but it does not look either particularly frightening or inviting, but rather it looks mystical. Here is only moss and light and remnants of civilization. The pictures on the inside of the gatefold show dead trees: apocalyptic, dreamlike, and beautiful. One of the LP jacket images shows a clear-cutting of the forest. This is what it looks like after industrial forestry. It looks clean - the remnants of a forest are gone. Behind the clearcuts there is a mountain looming, and the sun creates a shadow in front of it, creating a haunting effect.

On the back of the record, the trees are overgrown with moss, but there is room for people too, creating some ambiguity. The perspective of the photographer is quite low, creating foreground and background. In front is a tree stump covered with moss. From this perspective, the stump becomes large. We see two members of the band standing straight in the back, they look small and are almost hidden by the trees at first sight. One of the men is wearing a hat, and can represent civilization. They could be protectors of the forest, they seem to blend in and do not carry any tools or perform any actions. The use of light and the colors emphasize the mystical aspects of the scenes. The aesthetics of the image come across as quite beautiful. This is a place you would want to visit, except for the haunting clear-cuts perhaps. The colors are warm, the photos look dusty, almost shimmering and fairytale-like, signifying a sacredness of the land. This portrayal of place suggests the continued importance of landscape in the American culture, and emphasizes mankind as part of the natural world. Here, wilderness gives way to human civilization, and seems to coexist beautifully on the back cover of the album, though it is also a tale of decay and rebirth. The image suggests that the members of the band have, in Berg and Dasmann's words, reinhabited the land through "becoming fully alive in and with a place. It involves applying for membership in a biotic community and ceasing to be its exploiter."²⁴⁴

The bands express what Tuan calls *topophilia*, the human love of place. This love of place that they express with their music, lyrics, images, and with the ideas that they share in interviews, can make listeners and readers become aware of the band's, as well as their own,

²⁴⁴ Berg, "Reinhabiting California." 399.

regional identity. It can serve as an inspiration as well as an appreciation for the natural world of the Pacific Northwest, as well as help nurture ideas about Cascadia as a useful idea in environmental consciousness.²⁴⁵ Neither Echtra, Velvet Cacoon, or Wolves in the Throne Room mention the Pacific Northwest of Cascadia specifically, nor do they mention any specific place names. They do, however, name flora, fauna, weather conditions, and natural phenomena that make you think of the region.²⁴⁶

The link between environmentalism and popular music is a topic on the ascendent in American Popular music, according to ecocritic David Ingram. In his book, *The Jukebox in the Garden*, Ingram suggests how “Ecophilosophical speculation is also emerging in American popular music, particularly under the influence of both deep ecology and New Age thinking about the relationship between human beings and the rest of the natural world.”²⁴⁷ Ingram’s book does not mention the genre of metal, nor the subgenre of black metal, specifically, but this chapter argues that this link is particularly evident in Cascadian black metal.²⁴⁸ Aaron Weaver, drummer of Wolves in the Throne Room, shares the group’s perspective on science:

We need to destroy the modern worldview and its one dimensional understanding of reality. We need to destroy the notion that the only way to understand phenomenon is through that which is immediately quantifiable through a scientific process. It’s a really extreme and radical idea. That’s why we’re so interested in it because that extreme demand that you hear in Black Metal dovetails with our own interest in deep ecology and with radical environmentalism and radical ecology.²⁴⁹

This quote shows how the band sees itself as part of the radical environmental movement, and how they criticize modernity’s scientific rational thinking. Through this argument, the band compares and celebrates the extreme ideas of radical ecology to the extreme sounds of Black

²⁴⁵ In some ways Cascadian Black Metal might be more successful in this endeavor than the film *Occupied Cascadia* (2012) because its artistic qualities are more refined.

²⁴⁶ This includes owls, wolfs, oxen, eagles, oaks, moss, flowers, roses, birds, bones, stones, rocks, roots, rain, wind, fire, sun, stream, spring, mountain, forest, wet earth, wild beasts, wood, tinder, garden, trees, the moon, moonlight, the stars, dusk, and winter.

²⁴⁷ Ingram, *The Jukebox in the Garden : Ecocriticism and American Popular Music since 1960*. 12.

²⁴⁸ Cascadian Black Metal is diverse and includes neo-mystical conceptions of nature inspired by deep ecology. However, I am more interested in how the musical scene helps create the idea of the bioregion Cascadia. The artistic, spiritual, and cultural side to bioregionalism is as important to environmental thinking and placemaking as its more practical and pragmatic side.

²⁴⁹ Satan Rosenbloom, "Wolves in the Throne Room Drummer Aaron Weaver on Black Metal as Protest Music, Why Scion Is Satanic, and the Giant Wolf Chasing the Sun," MetalSucks, <http://www.metalsucks.net/2009/03/19/wolves-in-the-throne-room-drummer-aaron-weaver-on-black-metal-as-protest-music-why-scion-is-satanic-and-the-giant-wolf-chasing-the-sun/>.

Metal. They do not characterize themselves as only deep ecologists, but mention radical ecology, which can also include social ecology. As I argued in Chapter two, bioregionalism is ecocentric in its nature, but manages to incorporate some of the concerns of both deep ecologists and social ecologists.

Bioregionalism's understanding of place stems from the idea that only through developing a local sense of place is it possible to generate an ecological conscience. It assumes that place and space, more specifically a sense of place shapes our identity. Cascadian black metal can illustrate the notion of landscape as character-shaping. Echtra writes about wanting to create music that would show enthusiastic feelings about the deep relationship between humans and the natural world. Echtra explain, in a manifesto published online, how the band wanted to make music in a spiritual union with the rainforest of the Pacific Northwest.²⁵⁰ Olympia, where the band resides, is not far from Hoh rainforest, one of the largest temperate rainforests in the United States. This rainforest once spanned an area larger than Cascadia itself, from southern Alaska to far down into California. Echtra show an awareness of the place-based thinking of bioregionalism. It seems clear to the band that to understand the place they live in, they must learn about the natural landscape of the region. They express a wish to learn about the place, and identify with the place, both central ideas to bioregional thought.

Echtra knew that this project required place-based identification, and drew upon preexisting knowledge of bioregionalism and Black Metal for this purpose.(...) Cascadia as an ideational influence is a beautiful thing. The mythic quality of bioregionalism gives our inherently poetic nature room to breathe, and the elucidation of landscape as an organizing principle for understanding place is certainly apt.²⁵¹

Velvet Cacoon, located in Portland Oregon, states in an interview that they “cannot help but to be influenced by the dreary conditions which we live in. The landscape here serves as our inspiration and temple.”²⁵² The person conducting the interview tells Velvet Cacoon that he or she believes their music shares some qualities with the climate and natural surroundings of their bioregion, and asks whether this similarity is intentional:

²⁵⁰ Echtra, "Echtra, Cascadia Black Metal, and the Mythopoesis of Earth: Bioregionalism as Spiritual Embodiment".

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Bauer, "Interview with Sgl of Velvet Cacoon".

It is not a coincidence. It's very cathartic for us. Portland is about 45 minutes west of the mountains, and 45 minutes east of the Pacific Ocean. It is a good sized city in a valley surrounded by rivers and pine forests. It's the perfect place for us, and the constant rainfall and grayness suits us well. I believe we cannot help but to be influenced by the dreary conditions which we live in.²⁵³

From this we can infer that Velvet Cocoon see the landscape as influential on their music. The rain and the dreary weather of the Pacific Northwest or Cascadia seem to work well with the dramatic sounds of black metal. Now that I have established that Cascadian black metal in fact is bioregional, I will discuss what this can lead to.

6.5 Exercising our Bioregional Imagination

According to ecocritic Greg Garrard, bioregionalism is “a politics of ‘reinhabitation’ that encourages people to explore more deeply the natural and cultural landscape in which they already live.”²⁵⁴ This thesis argues that Cascadian black metal or eco-metal is a form of reinhabitation. Ingram asks how music can raise ecological awareness. This thesis argues that music raises such awareness through helping create the bioregional identity connected to the place Cascadia. A way of creating a local identity is through reinhabiting the land. If reinhabitation means “undertaking activities and evolving social behavior that will enrich the life of that place,”²⁵⁵ Cascadian black metal is an example of an activity that enriches the life of the region because of its development of the imagined space of Cascadia. This is one role music has in helping create a Cascadian imagination, and this shows how place-creation of an imaginative space parallels real space.

Wolves in the Throne Room have on several occasions put up branches of Douglas fir trees in the roof of the venues where they perform. They have expressed the wish that people sit or lay down on the floor during their shows. The concert audience is in this way reconnected with and experiencing the woods of Cascadia as part of the audio-visual show in a calm way. This can be one way of placemaking. In an interview, the band express a need to reconnect with place.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. 127-128.

²⁵⁵ Berg, "Reinhabiting California." 399.

I am concerned with local things and connecting in a deep way to place. I think that human culture needs to evolve past a materialistic and mechanistic worldview. I think that reconnection with wildness and ancientness is a worthwhile path (for me).²⁵⁶

This quote expresses a need to reclaim something from the past. It seems like something has been lost throughout the times of “a materialistic and mechanistic worldview” – a worldview in which knowing the world means reducing it down to components.

Criticizing science and modernity has its dangers, as we have seen. Steven Shakespeare posits possible descriptions of what Cascadian black metal might be, with the following question in his essay, “The Light That Illuminates Itself, The Dark That Soils Itself”:

Is the embrace of nature particularly associated with Black Metal related bands and projects of Cascadia - Wolves in the Throne Room, Fauna, Blood of the Black Own, Echtra, Alda, Skagos, Chasma, Leech, Threnos, and many others - a ‘hippy’ romanticism, a far right celebration of blood and soil, an American primordialist vision of the virgin wilderness/brutal mother? Or can it also offer an aural thinking of nature that troubles such truths?²⁵⁷

Is Cascadian black metal questioning any of these three “truths”? Does it fit into any of Shakespeare’s three categories? Is it “hippy romanticism” or “primordialism”? I will show how it is not, at least, a far-right celebration of blood and soil. In chapter 2.7 I pointed out how Madeleine Hurd’s research has shown how ecology can be a powerful paradigm that can easily be abused by the far right. Hurd does not mention black metal in her studies of eco-nationalism and the far-right, but she mentions Straight edge eco-nationalists, another type of musical fringe culture, usually associated with a left-wing, animal rights, no-drugs music scene. None of the sources I have looked at in this chapter make the suggestion that that one person belongs in Cascadia more than any other. Anyone willing to learn to live in place could theoretically be part of a bioregion. Nationality or race is not raised as a topic in the interviews I have read. Although in an interview from 2006 with Wolves in the Throne Room, the band seems very aware of and sensitive to the theme. They mention National Socialist black metal as having equally strong ecological sensibilities as the far-left.

It must be noted that radical environmentalism is very much a part of the tradition of the radical right. Even rabidly anti-Semitic NSBM has a strong ecological sensibility,

²⁵⁶ Stosuy, "Show No Mercy".

²⁵⁷ Nicola Masciandaro, *Hideous Gnosis: Black Metal Theory Symposium I*(Open Access2010). 7.

following the Nazi's (sic) explicit and well documented interest in preserving a pastoral, pre-modern Aryan utopia. At the same time, centrists decry organizations such as the ELF, who come from the anarchist tradition, as "fascists" and anti-humanists. Clearly there is a strong link between radical ecology and Black Metal, coming from the perspective of both the extreme right and extreme left. I don't understand how one could find an earth-centered ethic and Black Metal incompatible – to me, they are one-in-the-same. (sic)" ²⁵⁸Clearly, whichever side you are on, right or left, black metal and environmentalism are compatible. There is not much talk of harmony in black metal. Seeing nature as brutal is something eco-metal has in common with eco-Nazis. There exist territorial National Socialist black metal groups²⁵⁹ that only see right-wing bands as "real" black metal, and in the essay, "Remain True To The Earth: Remarks On The Politics of Black Metal," by Benjamin Noys, he contrasts the French right-wing black metal artist Famine with Wolves in the Throne Room. Famine has been quoted saying that Wolves in the Throne Room have no right to play black metal because they are not right-wing. Noys shows Famine expressing the view that the "left" has claimed environmentalism. In an interview with the online music blog *Pitchforkmedia*, the drummer Aaron Weaver of Wolves in the Throne Room shows some irritation over the opposite scenario, the link between environmentalism and the far-right in Europe, and distances the band far away from the extreme right.

I said in an interview with a German magazine that I was annoyed that certain ideas I am connected to, such as radical environmentalism and heathen spirituality, have become associated with the culture of the hard-right, especially in Europe.²⁶⁰

According to Benjamin Noys, if you couple any black metal with politics it would be "radical anti-humanist individualism."²⁶¹ Madeleine Hurd and the French National Socialist black metal artist Famine both show that attachment to place can become ethnocentric, and that it can be used by groups such as National Socialists in spreading racism and xenophobia.

The difference with regard the Cascadian bands is that the past they describe is damaged — something to get beyond rather than return to. Reinhabitation means to learn to live-in-place in an area that has been damaged through past exploitation. The band Echtra

²⁵⁸ Smith, "Interview with Wolves in the Throne Room 2006".

²⁵⁹ To the knowledge of this author, no such bands exist in the Pacific Northwest.

²⁶⁰ Stosuy, "Show No Mercy".

²⁶¹ Benjamin Noys, "Remain True to the Earth: Remarks on the Politics of Black Metal. ," in *Hideous Gnosis: Black Metal Theory Symposium 1*, ed. Nicola Masciandaro(Charleston, S.C.: [S.n.], 2010).105.

describes the lands as battered, and sees place as not only a practice but as something that will shape them into becoming indigenous.

One immutable aspect of the truth of this moment is *place*; we exist only in relationship to this instant and the environs in which we dwell. (..)We must allow *place* to take us over entirely, forsaking stratagem and policy, as we become autochthonous²⁶² beings capable of living in communion with a battered Land.²⁶³

A leading American phenomenologist of place, Edward Casey, wrote, "To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the places one is in."²⁶⁴ This local way of life seems to be a major concern of these bands. Ecocritic Lawrence Buell stresses that a sense of place should not stop at your home, but that place should be thought of as interdependent with the planet, and that this could change the concept of place into an environmental ethic. Buell suggests, "that place significantly though differentially affects well-being through physical environment, social context, and phenomenology of perception."²⁶⁵ Wolves in the Throne Room admit that "Our relationship with the natural world is a healing force in our lives."²⁶⁶ Edward Casey agrees that place can have an impact on the body. "Place is not one kind of thing: it can be psychical as well as physical, and doubtless also cultural and historical and social."²⁶⁷ Maybe we can talk about Cascadian black metal as a spiritual reinhabitation, where listening to the music involves an active relationship that can have an impact on the body and mind, creating a transcendental effect that can possibly exercise the imagination or even have a therapeutic effect for some.

This discourse of healing in the bioregional imagination maintains that you become a better inhabitant of earth through reinhabitation or living-in-place. Tuan talks about this exchange in his book *Space and Place*: "The idea here stresses how human behavior can influence nature, but the converse is also believed to occur."²⁶⁸ The idea that you can heal the land and maybe yourself through reinhabitation, as a metaphorical process of healing and restoration, implies that society is sick and in need of a cure. Reinhabitation is proposed as a

²⁶² Indigenous.

²⁶³ The Cascadian Independence Project, "Echtra, Cascadia Black Metal, and the Mythopoesis of Earth: Bioregionalism as Spiritual Embodiment," *CascadiaNow!* -- The Cascadian Independence Project, <http://www.cascadianow.org/our-newsletter/2012-newsletter-index/october2012/echtra-cascadia-black-metal-and-the-mythopoesis-of-earth-bioregionalism-as-spiritual-embodiment/>.

²⁶⁴ Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place." 18.

²⁶⁵ Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. And Beyond*. 77.

²⁶⁶ Smith, "Interview with Wolves in the Throne Room 2006".

²⁶⁷ Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place." 31.

²⁶⁸ Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* 97.

cure for our estrangement from the land. Modernity has created a nature culture dichotomy and bioregionalism offers a way to bridge this gap. The medicine is to live locally and deliberately with the land, to repair damage and degradation. Steven Fesmire, Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies at Green Mountain College argues in his essay, "Ecological Imagination in Moral Education, East and West," that "through active exercise of ecological imagination we are already healing ourselves and our environments."²⁶⁹

Listening to Cascadian black metal can at best exercise our bioregional imagination, or be a way to develop a social identity related to place. The Cascadian black metal bands try to reinhabit a place in order to overcome fear and alienation. This thesis's argument then, is that Cascadian black metal is a spiritual reinhabitation strategy of the bands, and a way for listeners and fans to exercise their ecological imagination, a way to forge identity in place and possibly a way to provide hope.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that when bioregionalism extends through cultural expressions like *Ecotopia*, *Occupied Cascadia* or Cascadian Black Metal, there is an increased audience, readers, listeners; it grows in the human imagination. Ingram claims the field of ecocriticism and popular music is a field largely unexplored. In my examination, I have found that Cascadian Black Metal can be read as a reinhabitation strategy. It is crucial that race and nationality is left out of the question when talking about attachment to place. This has led me to conclude that the potential outcomes of music with ecological, and in this case, bioregional thought, is a way of creating place. I have argued that music is a part of Cascadian bioregional movement and that the scene helps sustain the imaginary place of Cascadia. The musical scene of Cascadian Black Metal is, in ecocritic David Ingram's words, "a form of utopian expression that prefigures a better society in the future, including a healed relationship between human beings and the natural world."²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ Steven Fesmire, "Ecological Imagination in Moral Education, East and West," in *Pragmatism and Environmentalism*, ed. Hugh P. MacDonald (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2012). 218.

²⁷⁰ Ingram, *The Jukebox in the Garden : Ecocriticism and American Popular Music since 1960*. 15.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Place Lives

When I set out to write this thesis, I wanted to find a way to explore things I had seen in the American West. In my imagination, Americans were driving around, one person per car, looking for the next strip mall; judged from the vantage point of a Norwegian, they seemed lost in undifferentiated space. This thesis has countered this dominant narrative, the dark projection of placelessness that is plaguing America, by exploring a part of American culture that endows space with value, and develops a sense of place in order to “inhabit” space, to use Berg and Dasmann’s term.

My background shapes what I see and how I interpret it. As a student of American Studies, I feel at home both in the Pacific Northwest or Cascadia, and in “Nordmarka” –the woods north of Oslo where I live now. I try to develop a sense of place in both places. I know where my drinking water comes from, and when I go to the Pacific Northwest, I know what food co-ops are the best, and how to get around by public transportation. How we connect to place is both personal and political. My attachment to both places is emotional. In Yi-Fu Tuan’s words, this makes me a “topophile.” Bioregionalism demands awareness and knowledge because a bioregion is a biotic community built around place as geography, memory, and ecology.

This thesis asked: How useful is bioregionalism as a response to the environmental crisis of our time and as a social and cultural practice? This thesis has demonstrated how bioregionalism is useful in connecting to place. Bioregionalism can function as a strategy for placemaking. With bioregional efforts, like knowing about what day the farmers’ market happens, buying local, or something as simple as knowing when the bus runs, you can build better communities. This does not have to mean that you need to stay put, or dwell in a rural place. These are things you can actually do everywhere. Bioregionalism is useful because of its pragmatic nature as well as its communal form, and because it reintroduces place as a main concern for environmentalism. Where you are does matter; however knowing the place is crucial.

This thesis has shown the usefulness of place as a theoretical category in environmental discourse. Radical environmentalism questions the loss of local and regional thought, and its replacement by the mainstream non-place-based environmental discourse.

While some might think that it is time to bring back the old slogan “think globally, act locally,” much needs to be done at the national and international (or “global”) levels as well. The global level is useful for international agreements, talks, and evaluation. As I am writing this conclusion, the UN Climate Change Conference is beginning in Warsaw, Poland. Many countries ask that the US must do more in this regard. These summits show that it is hard to act on a global level, as progress has been limited. Local solutions are being put on hold, or worse, set aside, until world leaders can agree globally.

This thesis has shown how the imagination supports environmentalism, how representations of place have been kept alive by the arts and literature. If humanity is going to have any chance in saving ourselves from the devastating effects of a warming planet, we need to be able to imagine alternatives to the status quo. Ecological utopias can function as inspiration, not blueprints, for strategies to cope with the environmental crisis. We are caught in a pattern where we point to hard science and global market structures as solutions to the crisis.

The most important question for the future is how to encourage different approaches in going about environmental change. By understanding cultural creativity as potentially a part of nature, I have chosen to include art as an important activity related to bioregional thinking in this thesis. The revival of place-based, bioregional initiatives comes in many forms. In Chapter 4, I argued how critical utopias are mainly an expression of a longing or hope for a better way of life. I argued that place awareness can lead to the development of ecological utopias, which have an important role to play in environmental thinking because of their transformative power, as Ernst Bloch reminds us. Art can both deepen the bioregional imagination inside and outside of Cascadia, extending beyond the local level to a global one. Robert L. Thayer suggests, “A distinctly regional art, aesthetics, literature, poetics, and music can evolve from and support bioregional culture.”²⁷¹ In Chapter 6, I showed how Cascadian black metal is an activity of placemaking.

Environmental problems are complex and need to be tackled by complex methods; the humanities has an important role to play through understanding the past in order to make sense of today. Through environmental history, deconstructing metaphors we live by, mediating environmental questions, revealing language and ideas, and close reading of texts, the humanities can contribute to environmental thought.

²⁷¹ Thayer, *Lifepace: Bioregional Thought and Practice* 94.

Bioregionalism is a realistic way of transitioning into a more sustainable society because it is pragmatic, democratic, proposes pluralist solutions, and puts place before principles. Much of the writings from the 1970s by Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson, and Gary Snyder were on rural, decentralized, agrarian, and individual efforts. It is a challenge for bioregionalism to stay relevant and useful through valuing urban and communal efforts. Perhaps I was too optimistic on the usefulness of bioregionalism. As shown in this thesis, bioregionalism can become disagreeable when it becomes territorial or exclusionary, and can in the worst cases lead to nationalism and racism. This thesis has conducted a more hopeful reading of the green regional identity, one in which instigating practical regionalism inspires others to find their own democratic and pluralist ways of thinking bioregionally.

I have tried to open up what bioregionalism can be, including the arts and urban places. I see these two areas as important when it comes to future research on place and the environmental humanities. A thesis should open up themes, not close them. This conclusion will not attempt to predict the future of environmentalism, or bioregionalism's role in environmentalist thought. Nevertheless, looking at American culture through environmental history, literature, and art has revealed to me the importance of place.

8 Bibliography

- Aarsand, Ingeborg H. "Utopian Communities and Land Use: The Puget Sound Co-Operative Colony." University of Washington, 2011.
- Abbott, Carl. "Competing Cascadias: Imagining a Region over Four Decades " In *Society for American City and Regional Planning History*. Oakland, California 2010.
- Aberly, Doug. "Interpreting Bioregionalism - a Story from Many Voices." In *Bioregionalism*, edited by Michael Vincent McGinnis Taylor & Francis e-Library: Routledge, 2005.
- Agnew, John A. Smith, Jonathan M. *American Space/American Place : Geographies of the Contemporary United States* New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Barnhill, David Landis. "Critical Utopianism and Bioregional Ecocriticism." In *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place*, edited by Tom Lynch, Cheryll Glotfelty and Karla Armbruster. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2012.
- Bauer, J.B. "Interview with Sgl of Velvet Cacaoon." Full Moon Productions, November 28th 2012 <http://www.fmp666.com/velvetcacaoon/vc.html>.
- Berg, Peter *Reinhabiting a Separate Country: A Bioregional Anthology of Northern California* Planet Drum Foundation, 1978.
- Berg, Peter, and Raymond Dasmann. "Reinhabiting California." *The Ecologist* 7, no. 10 (1977): 399-401.
- Berry, Thomas. *The Dream of the Earth*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990.
- Booth, Kelvin J. "Environmental Pragmatism and Bioregionalism." In *Pragmatism and Environmentalism*, edited by Hugh P. McDonald. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2012.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination : Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995.
- . *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005.
- . *Writing for an Endangered World : Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. And Beyond*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Callenbach, Ernest. *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston*. New York: Bantam Books, 1975.
- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. London, England: Penguin, 1962.
- Casey, Edward S. "How to Get from Space to Place." In *Senses of Place*, edited by Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso. 1996, 1993.
- Coates, Peter A. *Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Commoner, Barry. *The Closing Circle : Nature, Man, and Technology* New York: Knopf, 1971.
- Coventon, Kathleen. *History of the Puget Sound Cooperative Colony*. 1939.
- Cresswell, Tim. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2004.
- Cronon, William. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.
- Davis, Erik. "Deep Eco-Metal." the Washington Post Company, January 21st 2013 http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/music_box/2007/11/deep_ecometal.html.

- Di Chiro, Giovanna. "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice." In *Uncommon Ground*, edited by William Cronon. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.
- Echtra. "Echtra, Cascadia Black Metal, and the Mythopoesis of Earth: Bioregionalism as Spiritual Embodiment." *CascadiaNow*, September 17th 2013
<http://static.squarespace.com/static/521b7c54e4b0e63c9a89da62/521b836ae4b0751bf500a01c/521b8420e4b0751bf500bfd9/1377535008063/?format=original>.
- Eckersley, Robyn. *Environmentalism and Political Theory : Toward an Ecocentric Approach* London: UCL Press, 1992.
- Ellis, Jeffrey C. "On the Search for a Root Cause." In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon, 561 s. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.
- Falck, Sissel. *Knut Hamsuns Brev 1915-1924* Vol. 4, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1997.
- Fesmire, Steven. "Ecological Imagination in Moral Education, East and West." In *Pragmatism and Environmentalism*, edited by Hugh P. MacDonald. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2012.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Gatlin, Jill. "'Los Campos Extraños De Esta Ciudad'/'the Strange Fields of This City': Urban Bioregionalist Identity and Environmental Justice in Lorna Dee Cervante's 'Freeway 280'." In *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place*, edited by Glotfelty and Armbruster Lynch, 245-62. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2012.
- Geus, Marius de. *Ecological Utopias: Envisioning the Sustainable Society*. Utrecht: International books, 1999.
- Goldstein, Bruce Evan. "Combining Science and Place- Based Knowledge: Pragmatic and Visionary Approaches to Bioregional Understanding." In *Bioregionalism*, edited by Michael Vincent McGinnis. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Guarneri, Carl J. "The Americanization of Utopia: Fourierism and the Dilemma of Utopian Dissent in the United States." *Utopian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1994): 72.
- Guha, Ramachandra. *Environmentalism : A Global History*. New York: Longman, 2000.
- . "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique ". In *Philosophical Dialogues: Arne Næss and the Progress of Ecophilosophy* edited by Andrew Brennan, Nina Witoszek and Arne Næss, XIX, 492 s. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
- Heise, Ursula K. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Hunt-Hendrix, Hunter. "Trancendental Black Metal." In *Hideous Gnosis: Black Metal Theory Symposium I*, edited by Nicola Masciandaro, 238 s. : ill. Charleston, S.C.: [S.n.], 2010.
- Hurd, Madeleine. "The Nation, the Volk, and the Heimat: Understanding Eco-Fascist Iconographies of Space and Nature (Appended)." In *NIES Annual Symposium, "Environmentalism, Spatiality and the Public Sphere"*. Oslo, 2012.
- Ingram, David. *The Jukebox in the Garden : Ecocriticism and American Popular Music since 1960*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010.
- Jackson, Kenneth J. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Jefferson, Thomas, and Thomas Perkins Abernethy. *Notes on the State of Virginia* New York: Harper & Row, 1964.
- Judd, R.W. *Natural States: "The Environmental Imagination in Maine, Oregon, and the Nation"*. Taylor & Francis, 2013.

- Jun, Myung-Jin. "The Effects of Portland's Urban Growth Boundary on Urban Development Patterns and Commuting." *Urban Studies* 41, no. 7 (2004): 1333-48.
- Jørgensen, Finn Arne. *Making a Green Machine: The Infrastructure of Beverage Container Recycling*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011.
- Kahn-Harris, Keith. *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*. Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2007.
- Klinge, M.W. *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle*. Yale University Press, 2007.
- Kotkin, Joel. "Welcome to Ecotopia." *Forbes*, January 10th 2013.
- Kumar, Krishan. *Utopianism*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991.
- LastFM. "Alda." LastFM, September 19th 2013 <http://www.last.fm/music/Alda>.
- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There* New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Levitas, Ruth. "For Utopia: The (Limits of the) Utopian Function in Late Capitalist Society." In *The Philosophy of Utopia*, edited by Barbara Goodwin, 265 s. London: Routledge, 2001.
- LeWarne, Charles Pierce. *Utopias on Puget Sound: 1885-1915*. Seattle, [Wash.]: University of Washington Press, 1995.
- Ley, David. "Forgetting Postmodernism? Recuperating a Social History of Local Knowledge." *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no. 5 (2003): 537-60.
- Light, Andrew, and Eric Katz. *Environmental Pragmatism*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin. *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.
- Lynch, Tom, Cheryll Glotfelty, and Karla Armbruster. *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place* Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2012.
- Mark, Jason. "Naomi Klein: Green Groups May Be More Damaging Than Climate Change Deniers " Salon Media Group, September 20th 2013 http://www.salon.com/2013/09/05/naomi_klein_big_green_groups_are_crippling_the_environmental_movement_partner/.
- Masciandaro, Nicola. *Hideous Gnosis: Black Metal Theory Symposium I*. Open Access2010.
- Massey, Doreen. "A Global Sense of Place." In *Reading Human Geography*, edited by T. and Gregory Barnes, D., 315-23. London:Arnold, 1997.
- Metallum, Encyclopaedia. "The Metal Archives." Encyclopaedia Metallum October 10th 2013 http://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Wolves_in_the_Throne_Room/Two_Hunters/156710.
- Monteith, Sharon. *American Culture in the 1960s* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.
- Moynihan, Michael, and Didrik Söderlind. *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*. Los Angeles, Calif.: Feral House, 2003.
- Muir, John. *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1998.
- Mumford, Lewis. *The Culture of Cities*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938.
- Murphy, Patrick. "Grounding Anotherness and Answerability." In *Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies : Transatlantic Conversations on Ecocriticism*, edited by Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer, 490 s. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006.
- Nash, Roderick. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Nicolson, Marjorie Hope. *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959.

- Nixon, Richard. *Richard Nixon: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President : 1970* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971.
- Noys, Benjamin. "Remain True to the Earth: Remarks on the Politics of Black Metal. ." In *Hideous Gnosis: Black Metal Theory Symposium 1*, edited by Nicola Masciandro, 238 s. : ill. Charleston, S.C.: [S.n.], 2010.
- Næss, Arne, Bill Devall, and Alan Drengson. *Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*. Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2008.
- Proctor, James D. ; Berry, Evan. "Ecotopian Exceptionalism." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, no. [JSRNC 5.2 (2011) 145-163] (2011).
- Project, The Cascadian Independence. "Echtra, Cascadia Black Metal, and the Mythopoesis of Earth: Bioregionalism as Spiritual Embodiment." CascadiaNow! -- The Cascadian Independence Project, August 17th 2013 <http://www.cascadianow.org/our-newsletter/2012-newsletter-index/october2012/echtra-cascadia-black-metal-and-the-mythopoesis-of-earth-bioregionalism-as-spiritual-embodiment/>.
- Relph, Edward. "A Pragmatic Sense of Place." *Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter* 20, no. 3 (2009): 24-31.
- Rockström, J., W. Steffen, K. Noone, Å. Persson, F. S. Chapin, III, E. Lambin, T. M. Lenton, M. Scheffer, C. Folke, H. Schellnhuber, B. Nykvist, C. A. De Wit, T. Hughes, S. van der Leeuw, H. Rodhe, S. Sörlin, P. K. Snyder, R. Costanza, U. Svedin, M. Falkenmark, L. Karlberg, R. W. Corell, V. J. Fabry, J. Hansen, B. Walker, D. Liverman, K. Richardson, P. Crutzen, and J. Foley. "Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity." *Ecology and Society* 14(2), no. 32. (2009).
- Rosenbloom, Satan. "Wolves in the Throne Room Drummer Aaron Weaver on Black Metal as Protest Music, Why Scion Is Satanic, and the Giant Wolf Chasing the Sun." MetalSucks, March 11th 2013 <http://www.metalsucks.net/2009/03/19/wolves-in-the-throne-room-drummer-aaron-weaver-on-black-metal-as-protest-music-why-scion-is-satanic-and-the-giant-wolf-chasing-the-sun/>.
- Ryan, Robert L. and Grese, Robert E. "Urban Volunteers and the Environment: Forest and Prairie Restoration." In *Urban Place : Reconnecting with the Natural World*, edited by Peggy F. Barlett, VIII, 330 s. : ill. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005.
- Sanders, Jeffrey C. *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability : Inventing Ecotopia*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010.
- Sanders, Scott Russell. *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World*. Boston: Beacon Press (MA), 1993.
- Sargisson, Lucy. "Green Utopias of Self and Other." In *The Philosophy of Utopia*, edited by Barbara Goodwin. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Schellenberger, Michael and Ted Nordhaus. "The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World ". (2004).
- Schwantes, Carlos A. *The Pacific Northwest : An Interpretive History*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.
- Shi, David E. *The Simple Life : Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Smith, Bradley. "Interview with Wolves in the Throne Room 2006." October 23rd 2012 <http://www.nocturnalcult.com/WITTRint.htm>.
- Snyder, Gary. *A Place in Space : Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds : New and Selected Prose*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1995.
- . *The Practice of the Wild : Essays*. New York: North Point, 1990.
- SouthernLord. "Interview, Wolves in the Throne Room." Southern Lord, October 15th 2012 <http://www.southernlord.com/press/wolvesinthethroneroom/interview.php>.

- Sparke, Matthew. "Not a State, but More Than a State of Mind: Cascading Cascadias and the Geo-Economics of Cross-Border Regionalism." In *Globalization, Regionalization, and Cross-Border Regions*, edited by Markus Perkmann and Ngai-Ling Sum. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Steinberg, Ted. *Down to Earth : Nature's Role in American History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Stosuy, Brandon. "Show No Mercy." March 23rd 2013 <http://pitchfork.com/features/show-no-mercy/7668-show-no-mercy/>.
- Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Sweet, Mel, and Devin Hess. "Occupied Cascadia." 1.56.10. <http://cascadiamatters.org/2012/occupied-cascadia>, 2012.
- Thayer, Robert L. *Lifepace: Bioregional Thought and Practice* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Thomashow, Mitchell. "Towards a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism." In *Bioregionalism*, edited by Michael Vincent McGinnis Taylor & Francis e-Library,; Routledge, 2005.
- Thompson, Gregoy L. "Taming the Neighborhood Revolution: Planners, Power Brokers, and the Birth of Neotraditionalism in Portland, Oregon." *Journal of Planning History* 6, no. 214 (2007).
- Thoreau, Henry D. *The Heart of Thoreau's Journals*. New York: Dover, 1961.
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden and Other Writings* New York/Toronto/London: Bantam Books, Inc., 1962.
- Timberg, Scott. "The Novel That Predicted Portland." New York Times, August 14th 2013 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/14/fashion/14ecotopia.html?pagewanted=2&r=1&>.
- Todd, Douglas. *Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia : Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest* Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2008.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.
- . *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1974.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. Bremen: Outlook Verlag, 2011.
- Weiner, Douglas R. "A Death-Defying Attempt to Articulate a Coherent Definition of Environmental History." *Environmental History* 10, no. 3 (2005): 404-20.
- White, Richard. "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?" In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.
- YouTube. "Michael Jackson - Earth Song (Brit Awards 1996) " YouTube, LLC, November 10th 2013.
- Zukin, S. *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2009.

9 Recordings Cited

The Doors. “When the Music’s Over” from *Strange Days* (1967) Elektra
Gaye, Marvin. “Mercy, Mercy Me (Ecology)” from *What’s going on* (1967) Motown
Mitchell, Joni. “Yellow Taxi” from *Ladies of the Canyon* (1970) Reprise/WEA
Velvet Cacoon. “Northsuite” from *Northsuite* (2005) Ivory Snowfish
Velvet Cacoon. *Music For Falling Buildings* (2002) Self-released
Wolves in the Throne Room. *Celestial Lineage* (2011) Southern Lord
Wolves in the Throne Room. “I Will Lay Down My Bones Among the Rocks and Roots”
from *Two Hunters* (2007) Southern Lord

10 Appendix

A map of Cascadia looks different depending on who you ask. This map from 2005, made by the Northwest Environmental Watch, now called Sightline Institute, defines Cascadia by the watersheds that flow into the Pacific Ocean.

