

**The Future of Nature:  
Writing on a Human Ecology from *Orion* Magazine**

**Online Teacher's Guide**

**Edited and Compiled  
by Tom J. Hillard**

**Contributors:**

Eric Chilton, University of Arizona  
Tom J. Hillard, Boise State University  
Corey Lewis, Humboldt State University  
Kathryn Miles, Unity College  
Gioia Woods, Northern Arizona University

**Milkweed Editions  
2008  
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# ACTION

by Corey Lewis

## INTRODUCTION

Awareness demands action. On a planet whose life-support systems are rapidly being destroyed and in a civilization that is quickly approaching collapse, immediate and effective action in response to environmental problems is the only ethical and practical choice left. To do any less, to refuse to act on our awareness of these problems is in many senses criminal, if not completely insane. As Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. both argued, to do nothing in the face of injustice is the same as supporting that injustice.

The authors collected in this section call for us to move beyond our awareness of environmental problems and to take action on their behalf. They share stories of moving from “I know” to “I care” and finally to “I act,” and in doing so, they encourage us to make a similar transition. Whether it is Peter Sauer’s powerful synthesis of environmental and human rights or Jeffrey Kaplan’s convincing demonstration that our democracy is being destroyed, we are forced to contend with the fact that awareness is not enough. Even from the most selfish of perspectives—from a desire to defend our very lives and liberties—radical action is warranted. As Derrick Jensen notes in “Beyond Hope,” when you move from awareness to action, “when you quit relying on hope, and instead begin to protect the people, things, and places you love, you become very dangerous indeed to those in power. In case you’re wondering, that’s a very good thing.”

Effective and sustained environmental action is not easy, however, as the authors in this section note. There are problems with our perceptions of ourselves and each other, and difficulties in making alliances and finding common ground, as Laura Paskus observes in “The Union Makes Them Strong.” And for many of us, as BK Loren demonstrates, there is a lack of political training, money, and time—the difficulty of being part-time activists who are set against full-time lobbyists and wealthy corporations.

Despite these challenges, however, the authors inspire us to act, with stories of their successes, as well as tales of their tragedies. Perhaps, as Van Jones argues, if we can adopt a greater sense of reverence for ourselves and those within our movements, we can be more effective in our efforts and enjoy more satisfaction and less sorrow from the process itself. Each author challenges us to revere life, liberty, and others (both human and nonhuman) enough to defend them all, especially from ourselves and our own apathy. As we read their words, we are encouraged to respond to their call to action in our own ways and our own places. For, like these authors, although we are united in a common cause our methods may differ; like the natural ecosystems we seek to defend, we are strengthened by both unity and diversity, and defined not by our intentions but by our actions.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & RESOURCES

### “REINHABITING ENVIRONMENTALISM”

Peter Sauer

1. Aldo Leopold writes “In our attempt to make conservation easy we have made it trivial.” What does he mean by this, do you agree or disagree, and what historical and contemporary examples can you find?
2. Peter Sauer and others argue that “a healthy environment is a human right,” that “our bodies are the biosphere.” Do you agree or disagree? Why have human and environmental rights been separated historically? What would the ecological and economic effects be of linking the two legally and politically?
3. Peter Sauer argues we should follow the “Precautionary Principle” rather than “risk assessment strategies” when making decisions that affect ecological and social health, and that we should shift the “burden of proof” from requiring victims to prove harm to requiring producers to prove safety. What are the differences between these two approaches and the potential effects—economically, ecologically, socially and politically—of following either?
4. How does the contention that a healthy environment is a human right—that pollution is a human rights violation—affect how we view groups like EarthFirst!, the Earth Liberation Front and the Black Bloc who engage in illegal actions and destroy corporate property when defending the environment? How does this perspective affect our responses to global environmental problems, such as climate change, and to those countries, companies and individuals most responsible for them?

#### Other Resources

- The Life and Legacy of Rachel Carson: <http://www.rachelcarson.org/>  
Information about the writer, scientist and ecologist who warned that chemical pollution was a threat to human rights.
- *The Land Ethic* – Aldo Leopold: <http://www.aldoleopold.org/about/landethic.htm>  
Read Leopold’s article from ‘A Sand County Almanac’, 1948
- Sandra Steingraber’s Web site: <http://www.steingraber.com/>  
Includes biographical information as well as media clips.
- The International Forum on Globalization: <http://www.ifg.org/>  
Includes information about the I.F.O and links to various globalization resources.
- The Vancouver Statement: [http://www.ifg.org/IFA/The\\_Vancouver\\_Statement.htm](http://www.ifg.org/IFA/The_Vancouver_Statement.htm)  
Read the statement in full
- Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle: <http://www.sehn.org/wing.html>  
Read the statement in full

## “CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED”

Jeffrey Kaplan

1. Kaplan notes that in 1886 the Supreme Court granted corporations the legal status of “personhood” and that they maintain these legal and political rights today. How have the rights of corporations changed over time? Should they have the legal rights of persons? Why or why not? Do they have the same legal responsibilities as persons? What are the potential effects of both?
2. Kaplan provides a number of examples where non-local governments or corporations have overridden the desires of local citizens, and argues that local governments should have greater authority than state, national, or international governments. Do you agree or disagree? Who should have the greatest authority, and in what cases or instances?
3. Kaplan argues that citizens must control corporations through government regulation, while proponents of a “Free Market System” argue that corporations provide essential jobs and services and respond to consumer needs in the same way as governments; thus, such regulation is unnecessary, inefficient, and prohibits the development of useful products and services. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
4. Kaplan describes a decline in American democracy and citizen empowerment while simultaneously tracking the rise in economic and political power of the modern corporation. To explore this contention, these changes and our participation in them, discuss the following: How often, and in what ways, do you give time or money to the following entities: A non-locally owned corporation? A locally-owned business? The federal or state government? Your local city, county or neighborhood government or citizen’s group?

### Other Resources

- Alexis de Tocqueville: <http://www.tocqueville.org/chap5.htm>  
Includes passages from de Tocqueville’s famous *Democracy in America*
- World Trade Organization Web site:  
[http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/gatt\\_e/gatt\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/gatt_e/gatt_e.htm)  
Official Web site of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and WTO
- C.E.L.D.F. (The Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund):  
<http://www.celdf.org/OrdinanceLibrary/tabid/61/ctl/Edit/mid/397/RushTownshipSewageSludge/tabid/88/Default.aspx>  
Contains details about the Rush Township Sewage Sludge Ordinance under ‘Ordinances’
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Government Web site:  
<http://www.fas.usda.gov/itp/Policy/NAFTA/nafta.asp>  
Includes details of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

## “BEYOND HOPE”

Derrick Jensen

1. Jensen argues that the legal tools environmentalists use are merely the “tools those in power grant them the right to use, which means whatever tools will be ultimately ineffective.” Do you agree or disagree that effective environmental change cannot be achieved through legal means alone? When should activists use legal means, and when, if ever, are illegal methods justified?
2. Jensen compares modern, industrial culture to both domestic abusers and the oppressive Nazi regime, contending that we are all victims of an abusive culture. Do you agree or disagree? What specific examples support your view?
3. Jensen argues that many people “fear that if they allow themselves to perceive how desperate things are, they may be forced to do something about it.” Are there problems you are prepared to “do” something about, and if so, what are you prepared to do? What will have to happen in order to prepare you to do more? For example, how bad must climate change get, or what will you need to learn to convince you to sell your car? Or, if you have already done so, when and why?
4. Does hope inspire action, or, as Jensen argues, does it serve as a substitute for effective action? Why do you believe as you do? What personal and/or historical examples support your stance?

### Other Resources

- Derrick Jensen Web site: <http://derrickjensen.org/index.html>

Includes a bibliography of published and unpublished works as well as links to other activist sites, such as:

- The Campaign to Liberate Freedom: <http://www.liberatefreedom.com/>

Campaign that asks the question, “How can we liberate freedom, personal and global, from the forces of indoctrination, fear, and complicity with war?”

- In the Wake: <http://www.inthewake.org/>

Working Web site of Aric McBay’s work-in-progress, *In the Wake*, which covers skills and discussion for dealing with what he calls the coming industrial collapse.

## “THE UNION MAKES THEM STRONG”

Laura Paskus

1. Is the Jobs vs. Environment debate a false dichotomy or an accurate representation of the problem? Why or why not? In what ways or instances do ecological and economic values compete against each other, and when do they seem to work in concert?
2. Paskus notes a deep initial divide between the green and blue collar activists at her meeting, one they had to struggle to overcome. Do you consider yourself primarily pro-economy or pro-environment? How are those who share your views, as well as your opponents, portrayed by the media? Discuss the accuracy and effect of these representations.
3. Paskus argues that blue-collar employees of an extractive industry or polluting company actually have more in common with green-collar environmental activists from their own community than with their employers; she contends that recognizing these commonalities is essential for forming a blue-green alliance. What concerns do conservationists and employees have in common that are not necessarily the concerns of managers, owners, or investors?
4. Geller argues that switching from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy holds a number of advantages that go beyond environmental protection alone, noting a distinct difference between labor intensive industries and those that are financially or technologically intensive. What are the differences (both socially and ecologically) between an industry that is labor intensive and one that is technologically or financially intensive?

### Other Resources

- UNITE HERE! Web site: <http://www.unitehere.org/>  
Read about the history of UNITE HERE!’s formation and learn more about their affiliates and local unions. Plus, resources for historical documents and artifacts of UNITE’s predecessor unions.
- The Sierra Club Web site:  
<http://www.sierraclub.org/carlpope/2006/06/new-blue-green-alliance-is-born.asp>  
Read information from the organization that joined forces with union workers to form the Blue-Green Alliance.
- “Green Collar Workers” – Jim Young (July/August, 2003):  
<http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/200307/labor.asp>  
An article from Sierra Club magazine detailing the coming together of blue collar workers and environmentalists to form the Blue-Green Working Group.
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change:  
[http://unfccc.int/kyoto\\_protocol/items/2830.php](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php)  
The Web site contains the full text of the Kyoto Protocol, as well as a summary of the Protocol and more information on commitments and Kyoto mechanisms.
- United Steel Workers of America Web site:  
<http://www.usw.org/usw/program/content/3035.php>  
Includes the 2006 press release for the Sierra Club and United Steelworkers Blue-Green Alliance.



## “GOT TAPE?”

BK Loren

1. Loren describes a number of unique characters, few of whom we would expect to have anything in common or who fit the stereotypical mold of environmental “activist.” Have you ever done any activist work or known someone who has? How do your experiences compare with Loren’s representations of activists, as well as with common media representations of them? Why might a particular author or media outlet choose to portray activists as they do?
2. Although we often link “community” with “uniformity” or “sameness,” Loren contends that “community” has “little to do with do with like minds. It has to do with very differently minded people finding a way to get along because we all live in, are connected to, and share a sense of place.” What are the differences and similarities between belonging to a community and a group, between one’s place and one’s location?
3. Loren describes in detail some of the many challenges—personal, political, and financial—that she and her community of activists had to overcome during their struggle to defend their neighborhood. What obstacles do citizen organizers face that corporate lobbyists don’t? What examples can you find in the essay and in the real world?
4. What issues of environmental or social justice concern you in your own local community? Are there local groups or organizations working to solve these problems, and who are their members? Attend a meeting or interview a member to discover why they got involved and what their experience has been like.

### Other Resources

- YES! Web site: <http://www.yesworld.org/index.html>  
A nonprofit organization that connects, inspires and empowers young changemakers to join forces for a thriving, just and sustainable way of life.
- Action Network: <http://actionnetwork.org/>  
An online activism center for over 170 leading environment, health and population advocacy organizations.
- Greenpeace U.S.A.: <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/>  
The organization that stands for environmental change through action.
- Black Rhinoceros: <http://www.blackrhinoceros.org/index.html>  
A non-partisan, unaffiliated collective, that produces a directory for environmental activists wishing to campaign on ecological issues.
- B. K. Loren Web site: <http://www.bkloren.com/>  
Contains writing samples, including from “Got Tape?”

## “A LICENSE TO BE HUMAN”

An interview with Van Jones

1. Townsend prefaces the interview by asking “What if you share more with the wrongdoers and the larger society that sanctions the wrongdoing than it’s convenient to acknowledge?” How do we reconcile our drive for environmental protection and social justice with our complicity in the system that is destroying both?
2. Jones describes the “Reverence Movement” that has grown out of Aqueela Sherrill’s work on developing peace treaties between rival gangs. Pick an issue you feel strongly about and a group or individual you oppose on it. How could you maintain your position and adopt a stance of reverence toward both your issue and your opposition?
3. Jones argues that our economy “looks homicidal, and it is. But it’s also deeply suicidal.” Do you agree or disagree? In what ways is our economy homicidal, suicidal, or neither? What historical and current examples can you find?
4. Jones notes “Putting a generation of kids in prison is like clear-cutting a forest,” and contends that our youth are being “imprisoned” in a variety of ways, both literally and figuratively. How do the mainstream institutions of our society—education, government, family, and the media—treat our youth, and what are these social institutions training our youth for? In what ways are youth imprisoned and liberated by these forces and the messages they send?

### Other Resources

- Apollo Alliance Web site: <http://home.apolloalliance.org>  
Includes recent articles and information about the organization who claim to, “provide a message of optimism and hope, framed around rejuvenating our nation’s economy by creating the next generation of American industrial jobs and treating clean energy as an economic and security mandate to rebuild America”.
- The Institute for America’s Future: <http://home.ourfuture.org/>  
One of the groups that makes up the joint Apollo Alliance project.
- Center on Wisconsin Strategy: <http://www.cows.org/>  
The second group forming the Apollo Alliance.
- The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights: <http://ellabakercenter.org>  
Read the article “Green for All: Ella Baker Center Launches a Bold National Initiative” which advocates Green-Collar jobs for all.

# REFUGEES

by Tom J. Hillard

## INTRODUCTION

Taken literally, the word “refugee” denotes a person who seeks refuge, a place of safety or shelter. As it’s commonly used, however, it frequently suggests more the place or situation the refugee flees from, rather than the place of safety that is sought. Truth be told, human history is rife with stories of refugees escaping political turmoil, economic hardship, religious intolerance, violent governmental oppression, war, and natural catastrophe. While most people are aware of such events, one recurring story that frequently goes untold involves the way polluted and degraded environments create their own types of refugees. A false dichotomy between “nature” and “human” exists in the popular imagination, which has led to a common assumption that environmental problems involve only the nonhuman world. But all too often, environmental mismanagement disproportionately harms those living in poverty, indigenous peoples, and many other groups that lack the political clout to fight back.

The essays gathered here all focus on such issues of environmental justice. For example, Hope Burwell tells the story of Chernobyl’s aftermath; that catastrophe has faded from the minds of most people in the United States, but radiation contamination has created a life of horrors for the impoverished country of Belarus. Charles Wohlforth describes the Iñupiat in Alaska, a people whose centuries-old way of life is being threatened by the diminishing ice caused by climate change. Erik Reece brings the story closer to home, revealing how the greed of coal mining companies have led to the practice of literally removing mountaintops—thereby polluting everything in the poverty-ridden communities around them. In a similar fashion, Judith Nies presents an exposé of the hidden tragedy of Black Mesa in Arizona and how it has affected the Navajo and Hopi nations. Mark Dowie offers a slightly different story: he shows the startling ways that native peoples around the world have frequently been displaced not by big business, but instead because of the interests of major conservation organizations.

Even in the face of this litany of despair, these authors all give us a sense of hope: the idea that something can be done to change the status quo. Each one shows how environmentalism must merge with social justice. We might look to Charles Wohlforth, who locates such hope in respect for the places we inhabit, something that could be learned from the “conservation refugees” who Mark Dowie describes. Perhaps the most important lesson here is that the move to help these refugees begins in the act of storytelling itself. “We need new tools, new narratives, new stories,” Judith Nies tells us. Taken together, these essays stand as examples of just where to start.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & RESOURCES

### “CONSERVATION REFUGEES”

Mark Dowie

1. Dowie contends that “It’s no secret” native peoples have been displaced worldwide by big industry. Do you agree? Do some research in your own region to understand more about the native peoples that have lived there (or nearby).
2. “The true worldwide figure” of conservation refugees, in Dowie’s words, “would depend upon the semantics of words like ‘eviction,’ ‘displacement,’ and ‘refugee.’” What do you think is the best word to describe the situations Dowie is discussing? What, if any, potential drawbacks are there in using any of these words?
3. Dowie writes about the problems caused by “this brand of conservation that puts the rights of nature before the rights of people.” Do you think there should be a distinction between “nature” and “people”? Aren’t people a part of nature? To what extent is this dichotomy (whether true or false) part of the problem? What other essays in *The Future of Nature* address this problem?

#### Other Resources

- IUCN Web site: <http://www.iucn.org/>

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

- The Ford Foundation: <http://www.fordfound.org/>.

Web site for the organization that claims to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation and advance human achievement.

- Global Environmental Facility: <http://www.gefweb.org>

Affiliated with the World Bank, this group was given the responsibility of managing the National Parks, which displaced the Batwa people of Uganda.

- T.N.C. (The Nature Conservancy): <http://www.nature.org/>

One of the largest conservation organizations listed in Mark Dowie’s essay.

- World Wildlife Fund: <http://www.wwf.org/>

Arguably the most well known of the large conservation groups, this Web site lists on-going projects in 47 countries worldwide.

- Wildlife Conservation Society: <http://www.wcs.org/>

Web site for the group whose President and C.E.O is the controversial Steven Sanderson, who claimed that the global conservation agenda had been “hijacked” by advocates for indigenous peoples.

- Cultural Survival: <http://www.cs.org/>

One of the human rights groups who claim to promote the rights, voices and visions of indigenous peoples.

- First Peoples Worldwide: <http://firstpeoplesworldwide.org/>

Another human rights group that claims to be the only one to be led by Indigenous peoples and dedicated to the mission of promoting Indigenous economic determination and strengthening communities through asset control and dissemination of knowledge.

- Survival International: <http://www.survival-international.org/>

'The Movement for Tribal Peoples'.

- Forest People's Programme: <http://www.forestpeoples.org/>

Supporting forest people's rights.

## “JEREMIAD FOR BELARUS”

Hope Burwell

1. The title of this essay is “Jeremiad for Belarus.” Do some research about the “jeremiad” as a rhetorical form. In what ways does this essay follow that form? What other forms might work to convey the information Burwell provides?
2. Burwell writes, “Whether they are Belarusian or American, two million people cannot be resettled, I think.” Do you agree? What are the obstacles to such a mass resettlement?
3. This essay makes strong connections between the landscapes of Belarus and Iowa, the author’s home state. What effect do these comparisons have? How does Burwell’s personal experience help shape her argument?

### Other Resources

- International Atomic Energy Agency:

<http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/Chernobyl/>

This site features reports on the legacy of the Chernobyl disaster as well as the reported exposure and effects of the accident.

- European Center for Environment and Health:

<http://www.euro.who.int/document/e72016.pdf>

The World Health Organization’s Regional Office for Europe Web site. This particular link is for a report entitled “Highlights on Health in Belarus” which focuses on the after effects of the Chernobyl disaster.

- The United Nations Development Program:

[www.undp.org/dpa/publications/chernobyl.pdf](http://www.undp.org/dpa/publications/chernobyl.pdf)

A report entitled “The Human Consequences of the Chernobyl Accident: A strategy for Recovery”.

## “MOVING MOUNTAINS”

Erik Reece

1. In numerous places throughout the essay, Reece draws a comparison between the Mountain Justice Summer activists and the events of Mississippi Freedom Summer that initiated civil rights reform in the 1960s. Do you think these comparisons are justified? Why or why not?
2. Reece explains that “[i]n the language of economics, Debra Burke’s death was an externality—a cost that simply isn’t factored into the price Americans pay for coal.” How might one go about figuring the “cost” of a thing? Compare this idea to Solnit’s essay “Winged Mercury and the Golden Calf.”
3. Why do you suppose mountaintop removal hasn’t received much national media attention? What reasons does Reece give for this lack of publicity? What could be done to change this?
4. Activist Larry Gibson asks the questions: “What do you hold so dear that you don’t have a price on it? And when somebody comes to take it, what will you do?” How would you answer these questions? How would you communicate with someone who “comes to take it”?

### Other Resources

- Tennessee Mountain Justice: <http://www.mountainjusticesummer.org/actions/>  
Web site detailing the actions of Mountain Justice Summer and the arrests of Coalfield citizens delivering demands to Massey headquarters.
- Appalachian Regional Commission: <http://www.arc.gov/index.jsp>  
A federal-state partnership that works with the people of Appalachia to create “opportunities for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life”.
- The Mountaintop Removal Roadshow: <http://mountainroadshow.com/>  
Information about the impact of mountaintop removal on: coalfield residents, communities and the environment.
- Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www.epa.gov/>  
U.S. agency that works to protect human health and the environment.
- The Appalachian Folklife Center: <http://www.folklifecenter.org/>  
Information on the programs organized by this group, which calls itself, “progressive, nonprofit, educational...dedicated to a mountain heritage of freedom and self-reliance.”

## “ON THIN ICE”

Charles Wohlforth

1. In many places in his essay, Wohlforth contrasts modern scientific knowledge with older, traditional Inupiat knowledge. What does the essay have to say about the merits of these different ways of knowing the world?
2. On page 113, Wohlforth quotes Richard Glenn as saying that the success of the Inupiat living in their surroundings is largely a result of “respect”—a word he uses multiple times. What does he mean by this term? What might “respecting” a place or region actually look like, in practice?
3. Wohlforth approaches his essay as a storyteller, offering a narrative about a group of people in a specific place. Even though his topic is serious and potentially catastrophic, his tone is one of a detached observer: he doesn’t cast judgment or explore the causes of the warming he describes. Do you find this approach effective? Why or why not? How might the effect of the essay change if he were to use a more impassioned tone?

### Other Resources

- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: <http://www.ipcc.ch/index.htm>  
Established to provide an objective source of information about climate change.
- National Snow and Ice Data Center: <http://www.nsidc.org/sotc/>  
Provides an overview of the status of snow and ice as indicators of climate change.
- Arctic Research Consortium of the United States: <http://www.arcus.org/>  
ARCUS is a non-profit corporation consisting of institutions organized and operated for educational, professional, or scientific purposes.
- Charles Wohlforth online: <http://www.wohlforth.net/>  
The author’s Web site which include some of his work, and travel advice to the national parks in Alaska.



## “THE BLACK MESA SYNDROME”

Judith Nies

1. The opening line claims that “Black Mesa is not black and it is not a mesa,” establishing a theme that continues throughout Nies’s essay: things are not what they seem. What are the obstacles that have kept the truth about Black Mesa’s history from being known?
2. In her title, Nies calls the phenomenon at Black Mesa a “syndrome.” What does this word mean? In what ways is this an appropriate term to use? What other stories told in *The Future of Nature* exemplify this “syndrome”? Are there any in your local region that fit this pattern?
3. In her conclusion, Nies argues that “[w]e need new tools, new narratives, new stories” if we want to right the wrongs she describes. Do you think her essay is an example of one of these “new narratives”? Why or why not? Given the state of modern corporate-owned media, which she describes, how can we create these types of narratives and stories so that they will be read?

### Other Resources

- Black Mesa Indigenous Support: <http://www.blackmesais.org/>  
Under ‘background information’ this Web site includes Judith Nies essay amongst many others detailing the history of Black Mesa.
- Black Mesa Water Coalition: [http://www.blackmesawatercoalition.org/black\\_mesa.html](http://www.blackmesawatercoalition.org/black_mesa.html)  
A youth led inter-tribal and multi-cultural organization aimed at building sustainable communities.
- Black Mesa Pipeline Inc.: <http://www.blackmesapipeline.com/>  
The company in charge of the slurry pipeline in Black Mesa.
- The Central Arizona Project: <http://www.cap-az.com/>  
Official Web site of the “concrete highway for water”.
- Judith Nies: <http://www.judithnies.com/>  
The author’s Web site, which details her career in writing.

# BOUNDARIES

by Eric Chilton

## INTRODUCTION

Nature is born; culture is made. This basic etymological distinction, however coarse its shape, provides a useful platform from which to view the way we use these words. Nature describes the world as it is and, when applied to the phenomena of the non-human realm, it seems wholly apart from us. Culture, on the other hand, is our invention, and we should be ready to accept both credit and blame for that. But in actual practice, these words tend to jostle each other as they derive meaning in context. For example, it is an ecological and historical fact that both corn and tobacco were originally New World crops. Quickly now: is that nature or culture? Once you answer, part two: is it still?

The essays in this section explore the boundaries between culture and nature, between human and non-human, between born and made. None of the authors represented, however, are principally concerned with policing the borders. Instead, it is by crossing boundaries, by examining their perforations and permeability, that these writers develop their ideas. To cross a boundary is to know its power and its limitations. When William Cronon and Ginger Strand describe two natural spectacles, they force us to reconsider notions of pristine wilderness, but they do not thereby reject these places. Alison Hawthorne Deming takes powerful feelings of awe as well as revulsion and explores their depths by way of the essayist's inward turn. If these are my "natural" reactions, she asks, then why is that so? John Landretti contemplates the places we call picturesque and natural, redeeming them by way of an unexpected aesthetic detour, and John Daniel takes on the pieties of place, reminding us of the occasional wisdom found in *not* knowing one's place.

In fact, despite their common focus on situated natural places, all the essays here are concerned with transit. They share an intuitive sense that the places we see are shaped in part by the journey we take to perceive them. They are therefore less informed by the cartographer's grid than they are by a sense of trajectory. Instead of a set of coordinates, their descriptions have a place to begin, a vector to travel, and a destination. The intent and direction of these trajectories vary widely, but they share a common vehicle, which is the writing itself.

Perhaps culture and nature are always jostling because they vie for status. Which one has more permanence? The planet on which we live will probably outlast us, but we constantly describe certain aspects of nature as frail and endangered. Culture inhabits a similar paradox; it can be at once transient and everlasting. When we witness a river turned on with a switch, an orchard in a wilderness, or a train blasting on us in the midnight, sometimes the trick is just in distinguishing which is which.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & RESOURCES

### “FAUX FALLS”

Ginger Strand

1. Near the end of her essay, Strand refers to “the in-between Niagara.” Is it possible that this in-between place could be one of the tributaries feeding the environmental disaster at Love Canal? Is it possible that the in-between place could, at the same time, be one of the currents that allows us to transcend such examples of environmental injustice? Why or why not?
2. Compare Niagara Falls to other natural and national spectacles, such as the Apostle Islands described by William Cronon. How do nature parks best serve the interests of their local communities, the touring public, and the larger ideals they claim to represent?

#### Other Resources

- Info Niagara: <http://www.infoniagara.com/other/history/index.html>  
Contains interesting human and geological history of Niagara Falls.
- “The Day They Turned The Falls On: The Invention of the Universal Electrical Power System”: <http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/niagara.htm>  
An article from the University of Buffalo.
- New York Power Authority: <http://www.nypa.gov/facilities/niagara.htm>  
The company in charge of the Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant.
- Ginger Strand: <http://gingerstrand.com/>  
The author’s Web page.

## “THE EDGES OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD”

Alison Hawthorne Deming

1. The sense and power of Deming’s writing comes in part from her ability to juxtapose compelling images. Consider, for example, the passage describing the forest laden with monarch butterflies. How does the image of a path scattered with the seeming corpses of butterflies inform the larger concerns of the essay?
2. The essayist’s job is often to take difficult questions and turn them inward—not, we hope, for the purpose of nourishing a writer’s unpruned ego, but to use the model of the writer’s mind-at-work as a pathway for the development of ideas. For an example, try tracking the progression of Deming’s thought leading from ecotourists’ overzealous appreciation of dolphins and sharks to a definition of what civilization must be at this point in history.

### Other Resources

- The World Tourism Organization: <http://www.unwto.org/index.php>  
Information from the United Nations-affiliated group.
- The Ecotourism Society (TES): <http://www.ecotourism.org>  
Organization that promotes responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improve the wellbeing of local people.
- Michoacán Reforestation Fund: <http://michoacanmonarchs.org/>  
Find information on the Monarch butterflies that migrate here and also on the reforestation project in place in the Mexican state.

## “ON WASTE LONELY PLACES”

John Landretti

1. Borrowing a turn of phrase from the poet Theodore Roethke, Landretti chooses a title that alerts his readers to the fact that language will not pass by unnoticed here. The unusual use of “waste” as an adjective wakes us up—makes us read again. Does it modify “lonely” or “places” or both? Where else in Landretti’s essay do you find language that resists easy assimilation? How does this technique fit with Landretti’s attention to natural environments that seem outside our conventional sense of the picturesque?
2. An understated yet recurring motif in Landretti’s essay is the issue of transit. The anecdotes about beleaguered families returning from their pilgrimages to national parks in overburdened station wagons tells one story. Another is implied by the fact that the author was hitchhiking when he encountered many of his “waste places.” How does this affect our understanding, for example, of the Ohio freeway cloverleaf, or the trackside Nebraska campsite?
3. Landretti imagines a scene of touristic excess at the Great Divide. Do you think that an observer practiced at appreciating “waste places” could redeem such a landscape? Why or why not?

### Other Resources

- Yosemite national park: <http://www.nps.gov/yose/>  
U.S. government Web site for one of the country’s first wilderness parks.
- Death Valley national park: <http://www.nps.gov/deva/>  
Web site for the national park described as the “hottest, driest, lowest” in America.
- Yellowstone national park: <http://www.nps.gov/yell/>  
The United State’s first national park, established in 1872.

## “A WORD IN FAVOR OF ROOTLESSNESS”

John Daniel

1. Daniel’s point that Edward Abbey was a newcomer to canyon country when he wrote *Desert Solitaire* comes as a shock that should be familiar by now. What other examples of place-based writing can you recall that emanate from the voice of an outsider?
2. Compare Daniel’s celebration of rootlessness with John Landretti’s method of hitchhiking as a way to see things anew.
3. Daniel is careful to avoid implying an unintended indictment of “rootedness” as he explores another way of experiencing the natural world. How would you strike a balance between the need for ecological and historical emplacement verses the value of mobility?

### Other Resources

- The Wilderness Debate:  
[http://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/ezine/wilderness\\_debate.html](http://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/ezine/wilderness_debate.html)  
An essay by Kari Mosden.
- Abbey’s Web: <http://www.abbeyweb.net/>  
Biography, bibliography, articles and more about the author who wrote *Desert Solitaire*.
- John Muir exhibit: [http://www.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/](http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/)  
John Muir founded the Sierra Club and this Web site is home to a host of information about the famous conservationist.
- John Daniel: <http://www.johndaniel-author.net/>  
The author’s Web site with a biography and book listings.

## “THE RIDDLE OF THE APOSTLE ISLANDS”

William Cronon

1. Cronon speaks directly to issues surrounding the management of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. However, many of his ideas can be extended to larger contexts. National parks in general are crucial stages for enacting nature, and they serve as arbiters for ideas of nature, nation, and the confluence of the two. What are the broader implications of Cronon’s call for a “storied wilderness”?
2. In his consideration of what a wilderness designation reveals and what it obscures, Cronon returns to the idea of Burt Hill’s orchard. Why? What is it about this form of agriculture that expresses the intimacy of culture and nature?

### Other Resources

- William Cronon: <http://history.wisc.edu/cronon/>  
The author’s Web page, with biography, bibliography and other useful information.
- Apostle Islands National Lakeshore: <http://www.nps.gov/apis/>  
U.S. government Web site for the islands of Lake Superior.
- Earth Day: <http://www.earthday.net/>  
The organization set up by Senator Gaylord Nelson in 1970 to promote environmental citizenship and year round progressive action worldwide.
- The National Park Service: <http://www.nps.gov/>  
With links to all of America’s national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks and sites, lakeshores, seashores, re-creation areas, scenic rivers and trails and the White House.
- National Wilderness Preservation System: <http://www.wilderness.net>  
See a map of ‘legal wilderness’ in the United States, where a great gap exists “between the Appalachians and the Rockies”.
- The Wilderness Act of 1964: <http://www.wilderness.org/OurIssues/Wilderness/act.cfm>  
Read about the act and also follow a link to read the full text of the 1964 Act.
- The Wilderness Act of 1975:  
<http://www.wilderness.net/index.cfm?fuse=NWPS&sec=legiseastern&error=404>  
Read the text of the lesser subscribed to 1975 Act.

# REVERENCE

by Gioia Woods

## INTRODUCTION

Reverence is not just a feeling. It's a *relationship* based on a feeling, or a constellation of feelings; love, honor, respect, even power are feelings that make reverence possible. To have reverence for a king or a god acknowledges the power that king or god has over us. To have reverence for a parent or loved one acknowledges the respect we have for that person. But what does it mean to have reverence for the natural world? The essays in this section provide a variety of answers. How can we develop a reverent relationship with nature? Many of the authors answer this question by focusing on the mundane: Go outside. Learn about your backyard. Garden. Above all, follow the Thoreauvian dictum—make contact.

In urging reverence, the authors here also challenge what we assume about power: Who has power? What's too much power? Cathrine Sneed describes how a garden has the power to change an inmate's life. David James Duncan questions the power we give to our reason. Lowell Monke warns against the false power virtual environments can inspire in us.

How can we enter into a reverent relationship with nature? Many of the authors describe the ways education can help. David Sobel proposes a model for appropriate, local, childhood-based environmental education; Robert Michael Pyle remembers the way "natural history" once inspired ecological literacy and an informed citizenry.

Creating and maintaining a meaningful relationship with nature requires reverence. We'll know when we're there, because our relationship with the natural world will be characterized by gestures of respect, not control. We'll value contact over simulation and complexity over simplicity. We will accept responsibility for our relationship with nature. As Oren Lyons says, we will choose the future instead of the present; we will act with reverence when we make our decisions for seven generations of people.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & RESOURCES

### “BEYOND ECOPHOBIA”

David Sobel

1. David Sobel critiques contemporary environmental education practices with this question: “What really happens when we lay the weight of the world’s environmental problems on eight- and nine-year-olds already haunted with too many concerns and not enough contact with nature?” How does Sobel answer this question? Do you agree or disagree with his assumptions?
2. Summarize Steve Moore’s research findings. What “curious pattern” does he find as he analyzes his teaching research? How does he explain these findings?
3. Sobel believes educators need a better sense of how to do age-appropriate environmental education. “We need a scheme,” he writes, “a big picture of the relationship between the natural world and the development of the person.” How can educators better match personal development and environmental education, according to Sobel?
4. What *feeling* should environmental education inspire in children, according to Sobel? What sort of environmental education have you experienced? Do you think it inspired important feelings in you? Important ideas? Important actions?

#### Other Resources

- The Harris Center for Conservation Education: <http://www.harriscenter.org/>  
Linking environmental studies to schools
- ‘Leave No Child Inside’: <http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/240>  
Article by Richard Louv in Orion magazine about the growing movement to reconnect children and nature, and to battle "nature deficit disorder".
- Richard Louv: <http://www.thefuturesedge.com/>  
Information on the author of the “Childhood’s Future” report.

## “CHARLOTTE’S WEBPAGE”

Lowell Monke

1. Lowell Monke argues that when we replace authentic experiences with virtual ones, we risk losing a sense of belonging in the natural world. Computers in the classroom, he believes, jeopardize the relationship between human and natural communities. Describe his evidence. What, in *your* opinion, are the pros and cons of computers in the classroom?
2. “There is a profound difference between learning *from* the world and learning *about* it,” Monke writes. What is that difference? Have you learned mostly *from* or *about* the world? Give some examples.
3. Underlying this essay is the assumption that a significant relationship among learning, knowledge, and reverence exists. What can inspire this relationship? What can denude it?
4. Monke wants his readers to beware of inappropriate notions about power and control. How can a virtual environment teach us to “value the power to manipulate objects and relationships?” How might this adversely affect our relationship with nature? Do you agree with this premise? Why or why not?

### Other Resources

- Association for the Advancement for Computing in Education: <http://www.aace.org/>  
An organization “dedicated to the advancement of the knowledge, theory, and quality of learning and teaching at all levels with information technology.”
- The Alliance for Childhood: <http://www.allianceforchildhood.net/>  
Web site for the organization that promotes: “an ecological understanding of the relationship between humans and technology”.
- Langdon Winner: <http://www.langdonwinner.org/>  
Author of *The Whale and the Reactor*’s homepage.

## “THE LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVE: AN INTERVIEW WITH OREN LYONS”

Barry Lopez

1. Oren Lyons is a Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan among the Onondaga people, a member of the Council of Chiefs of the Six Nations, and an American Studies professor. Lopez writes that Lyons “emphasizes fidelity to a set of spiritual and natural laws” that have guided humans throughout history. Lyons alludes to these laws throughout the interview. What are some of these laws? How do they (or can they) contribute to human and environmental health?
2. Lyons takes a long view when it comes to human history. What is significant about elders like grandmothers and grandfathers? What does it mean to “make decisions on behalf of seven generations?” How does this view differ from most American notions of progress?
3. Throughout the interview, Lyons refers to the idea of private property. What is his view of private property? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
4. “Leadership was never meant to take care of anybody,” Lyons explains. What, in his view, is leadership meant to do? How can leadership lead to personal and communal responsibility? Do you see evidence of this type of leadership in your community?

### Other Resources

- Council of Chiefs of the Haudenosaunee: <http://www.mohawknation.org/>  
Oren Lyons sits on this council
- Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force: <http://www.hetf.org/>  
The task force’s mission is to help Haudenosaunee nations in their efforts to conserve, preserve, protect, and restore their environmental, natural, and cultural resources.
- Barry Lopez: <http://www.barrylopez.com/>  
The interviewer’s Web site. Barry Lopez also edited *The Future of Nature*.

## “ASSAILED”

David James Duncan

1. Duncan wants to develop a workable cosmology, an account or system of the universe and the laws that govern it. This cosmology, he hopes, can “guide our interactions with creation, moment to moment, place to place.” After reading Duncan’s essay, describe what his cosmology might look like. What are its guiding principles? Do *you* have a workable cosmology? Does it differ from Duncan’s? If so, how? Where does Duncan’s cosmology come from? Where does yours come from?
2. Why does Duncan organize his essay as “improvisations?” What does it mean to improvise? How is an improvisation related to a story, “matter and spirit at play?”
3. Why does Duncan offer us the image of tying his “reason by its leash to a tree”? Why might he want to keep his reason out of his improvisations? Is it possible to approach a problem without using your reason? What would be the benefits of doing so?
4. Reverence is a central recurring theme in Duncan’s improvisations. What does he mean by reverence? How can we summon up reverence for the world? What can reverence do for us?

### Other Resources

- Annie Dillard: <http://www.anniedillard.com/>  
The official Web site for the author of *For the Time Being*.
- E. F. Schumacher: <http://www.schumachersociety.org/>  
Organization inspired by the writer of *Small is Beautiful* to link people, land and communities by building local economies.
- Teilhard de Chardin: <http://www.teilharddechardin.org/>  
The American Teilhard Association. A page for the “French paleontologist, priest, and mystic”.

## “THE RISE AND FALL OF NATURAL HISTORY”

Robert Michael Pyle

1. Natural history, Pyle explains, used to be one component of an engaged citizen’s life. Natural history “was considered a high and worthy calling.” What is natural history? Why, according to Pyle, did natural history become obsolete as a course of study?
2. What is the “extinction of experience?” How has the decline of natural history contributed to it, according to Pyle? Do you agree that we face this extinction? If so, what can we do to remedy it?
3. What are some fundamental differences between practices in natural history and current environmental education?
4. Have you ever been on a “botany walk?” Do you see nature study as an important part of your community? What organizations in your community promote the study of natural history?

### Other Resources

- The Natural History magazine: <http://www.naturalhistorymag.com/>  
Online magazine published by the American Museum of Natural History.
- Robert Michael Pyle: <http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/mag/contributor/106/>  
Orion magazine’s informational page about the author of the article.

## “THESE GREEN THINGS”

Cathrine Sneed

1. How does working with “these green things” give inmates hope? What does Sneed believe about the relationship among transformation, gardening, and hope?
2. Jails are bleak and scary places. The people Sneed works with, she says, “are the kind of people who, when you see them, you want to cross the street because they are scary people.” What does Sneed believe about these “scary people” she works with? How can her garden program help change people’s lives? How can the program contribute to the community?
3. Describe Cathrine Sneed. What kind of person do you think she is? How have her life experiences shaped her? What does she value? What keeps her going? What would you ask her, if you had the chance?
4. Conduct some preliminary research in your community. Do you have a program similar to the Garden Project? If so, how does it function? Who does it serve? If not, write a brief proposal for starting such a project. Include the who, what, why, where, and how necessary to build such an organization.

### Other Resources

- Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/prisons.htm>  
Prison statistics for the U.S. from the U.S. Department of Justice.
- Public Safety Performance: <http://www.pewpublicsafety.org/statistics/index.aspx>  
Statistics on state and federal prisoner populations.
- The Garden Project: <http://www.gardenproject.org/thegardenproject.htm>  
Teaching people stewardship of the environment and their communities.
- The Tree Corps: <http://www.sfsheriff.com/treecorps.htm>  
The San Francisco Sheriff’s Department’s post-release programs.

# MONSTERS

by Tom J. Hillard

## INTRODUCTION

The natural world has always been home to monsters. The first European settlers landed on the shores of North America to face a landscape filled with creatures both real and imaginary, from previously unknown wild beasts to sometimes even the Devil himself. Many settlers transplanted stories of the wild men, witches, and demons of ancient Europe, locating those creatures in the forests and hills of the “New World.” The Nineteenth Century brought us the science fictions of *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—stories about the monstrous aspects of human nature. In our modern era such stories still abound; popular film gives us everything from the realistic nightmares of *Deliverance* to the supernaturally-tinged tale of ill-fated hikers in *The Blair Witch Project*. Human culture, it would seem, has a knack for associating monsters and the wild—even when those monsters are all in the mind.

To the rational-minded twentieth-century citizen monsters are certainly hard to believe in. Nevertheless, the authors in this section remind us that they are very much alive and well—now only slightly different in form: These ones are all manmade and inescapably real, products of the foibles and follies of human achievement. For example, Bill McKibben describes the lengths that some people will go to in order to give their children every possible advantage in life, even when it includes tinkering with genetics; Sandra Steingraber reveals the hidden costs—and implicit dangers—found in everyday items as innocuous as vinyl floor tiling. The other essays locate horrors in more obvious places: William Fox shows us the pockmarked, post-nuclear landscape of the Nevada Test Site; Rebecca Solnit, the blasted mountains and valleys of California mining country; Marybeth Holleman, the oil-soaked beaches of Prince William Sound. Taken together, these essays give a startling and terrifying vision of the havoc humans can wreak on their surroundings.

But hope is not lost, and that is the point that urges these writers to put pen to paper. Like so many stories about monsters throughout history, the ones presented here are cautionary tales. Yes, they reveal the unintended consequences of human action, reminding us that even the best intentions can lead to horrifying results. But they also seek to inspire, to urge us to reevaluate the patterns of behavior that have led us to create so many monstrosities. It is said that those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it; the authors here each remind us what the stakes of such ignorance can be.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & RESOURCES

### “DESIGNER GENES”

Bill McKibben

1. McKibben concludes his essay by asserting “We’ll need to feel in our gut the reasons why, this time, we should tell Prometheus thanks, but no thanks.” How does the story of Prometheus help us understand McKibben’s argument? Moreover, the subtitle of Mary Shelley’s 1818 novel *Frankenstein* was “The Modern Prometheus.” In what ways is McKibben’s essay telling a similar story?
2. Describing the use of Botox in contemporary culture, McKibben observes that “People, in other words, will do fairly far-out things for less-than-pressing causes.” What other “far-out things” that people do “for less-than-pressing causes” can you think of? What is it that leads people to make such decisions?
3. McKibben offers a number of reasons to be skeptical about—or even afraid of—the possibilities of “designer genes.” List and describe the different types of arguments he makes. Which of these arguments is most convincing to you? Explain.
4. At several points in this essay McKibben draws from his personal experience, describing first a memory from his own childhood and then later discussing his relationship with his daughter. What effect do these parts of the essay have? In what ways do they help to reinforce his argument? If you were writing an essay on a similar topic, how would you present your information?

#### Other Resources

- Advanced Cell Technology: <http://www.advancedcell.com/>  
The organization mentioned in McKibben’s article, “focused on developing and commercializing human stem cell technology”.
- Genetics and Public Policy Center: <http://www.dnapolicy.org/>  
Working to help policy leaders, decision makers, and the public better understand the rapidly evolving field of human genetics and its application to healthcare.
- Center for Genetics and Society: <http://geneticsandsociety.org/index.php>  
A nonprofit working to “encourage responsible uses and effective societal governance of the new human genetic and reproductive technologies.” You can find Bill McKibben’s article here.
- ‘Up Front Designer Genes’: <http://www.parkridgecenter.org/Page31.html>  
Article from the Park Ridge Center for health, faith and ethics Web site.
- World Transhumanist Association:  
<http://www.transhumanism.org/index.php/WTA/index/>  
An international nonprofit membership organization which advocates the ethical use of technology to expand human capacities.
- Bill McKibben: <http://www.billmckibben.com/>  
The author’s official Web site.



## “THE PIRATES OF ILLIOPOLIS”

Sandra Steingraber

1. Steingraber compares the blast at the Illiopolis chemical plant to the wreckage at Ground Zero left by the 9/11 attacks, using almost the same language to describe them (see descriptions on pages 269 and 271). Do you think such a comparison is justified? Why or why not? How else might she have described the tragedy at Illiopolis?
2. Why do you think Steingraber called this essay “The Pirates of Illiopolis”? In what ways does that title reveal her concerns as an author?
3. In the aftermath of the explosion Bev Scobell observes that “We never believed or bothered to know what went on out there. . . . It was just a fact of life. We’ve lived with it for so long” (276). Do some research in your own community to discover what, if any, environmental controversies there are or have been.

### Other Resources

- National Toxicology Program: <http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/>  
An interagency program whose mission it is to evaluate agents of public health concern.
- Toxics Release Inventory: <http://www.epa.gov/tri/>  
A publicly available Environmental Protection Agency database containing information on toxic chemical releases and other waste management activities.
- Formosa Plastics: <http://www.fpcusa.com/>  
The company whose plant exploded in Illionopolis, Illinois.
- U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration:  
[http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show\\_document?p\\_table=NEWS\\_RELEASES&p\\_id=12120](http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=NEWS_RELEASES&p_id=12120)  
The U.S. Department of Labor group that charged Formosa with “forty-eight federal workplace violations”.
- The Stockholm Convention: <http://www.pops.int/>  
Web site for the United Nations treaty (not ratified by the U.S.) to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants.”
- Sandra Steingraber: <http://www.steingraber.com/>  
The author’s Web page.

## “RADIOACTIVE ROADTRIP”

William L. Fox

1. In the final paragraphs of the essay, Fox asks the question, “If Civil War sites are designated as national monuments and used to educate busloads of schoolchildren about the costly calculus of war, why not the Nevada Test Site?” (294). What is your answer to this question? Why? What are the differences between Civil War sites and the Nevada Test Site? What do you think it would take to make the Nevada Test Site a national monument used to educate schoolchildren?
2. Throughout much of the essay, Fox presents himself as a neutral observer recording information rather than critiquing it or judging it (until the final pages). Nevertheless, his attitudes toward the Nevada Test Site and events that have taken place there are clear. In what ways do Fox’s descriptions reveal his feelings about the Test Site, even when he appears on the surface to be writing objectively? Do you find this method of writing effective? Why or why not?
3. Fox writes that “The synergy of all this . . . is more than disturbing,” referring to the relationship between “a generation of kids” playing video games designed by “electronic-game techies” who are filming explosions to prepare those kids for real targets during wartime later in life. Do you agree with Fox’s assessment? Why is “all this” disturbing?
4. This essay is titled “Radioactive Roadtrip.” Why do you think Fox chose this title? In what ways does the essay borrow conventions from other “roadtrip” narratives? How does Fox’s purpose for his roadtrip compare with the purposes other people have for taking such journeys? Are they seeking the same thing?

### Other Resources

- Nuclear Weapons History: <http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/nuclear-weapons/history/index.htm>  
Historical information from nuclearfiles.org, a “project of the nuclear age peace foundation”.
- The Nevada Test Site: <http://www.nv.doe.gov/nts/default.htm>  
Government Web site for the area of land used for extensive Nuclear testing.
- The Center for Land Use Interpretation: <http://www.clui.org/>  
“A non-profit organization that catalogs sites of unusual land use and makes them accessible through visual documentation”.
- Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty: <http://www.ctbto.org/>  
The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a cornerstone of the international regime on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.  
The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, on 24 September 1996. It has achieved strong worldwide support, but has not been ratified by the United States.
- William L. Fox: <http://wlfox.net/>  
The author’s Web site.

## “WINGED MERCURY AND THE GOLDEN CALF”

Rebecca Solnit

1. Solnit ends her essay with the story from the book of Exodus about Moses and the golden calf. Is this an effective way to conclude the essay? Why or why not? What effect does using a Biblical parable (as well as previous stories taken from Greek and Roman mythology) have on her argument?
2. At several points in the essay, Solnit discusses the effectiveness of various metaphors used to describe the flow of wealth. What metaphors does she use in the course of her essay? What are the benefits and drawbacks of using metaphors to describe human history and experiences? Can we avoid them?
3. Solnit writes that “Today’s environmental and social justice advocates would like to see ‘true cost’ accounting, in which the value or cost of an item takes into account its entire impact from creation to disposal or recycling” (299). If you were to go about measuring the “true cost” of an object or item in your life, how would you go about doing so? Individually or in groups, choose an object and trace its history and the “costs” associated with it.

### Other Resources

- U.S. Geological Survey: <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2005/3014/>  
Article on the mercury contamination caused by the California Gold Rush.
- Ban Mercury Working Group: <http://www.ban.org/Ban-Hg-Wg/>  
Includes a report by the group entitled “Mercury Exposure: The World’s Toxic Time Bomb”.

## “IN THE NAME OF RESTORATION”

Marybeth Holleman

1. About the extensive research efforts in the wake of the oil spill at Prince William Sound, Holleman asks, “But what good is that knowledge?” (310). Do you agree with her assessment of the usefulness of all that research? Why or why not?
2. Holleman acknowledges that, in the course of trying to do the right thing, “It is hard to accept limits, limits to what we can do, to what we think we can do. It is hard to accept that the best thing may be to do nothing” (313). Yet later she advocates an attitude of “attentive love” toward the natural world. Is this a contradiction? Why or why not? Is it possible to “do nothing” and practice “attentive love” at the same time?
3. Compare the way Holleman presents the widespread environmental devastation at Prince William Sound to the way Solnit describes the pollution caused by gold and mercury mining in the nineteenth century. Which author’s method of argument and storytelling do you find more persuasive and convincing? Why?
4. Holleman contends that most of the so-called restoration efforts at Prince William Sound only “make things worse” (311). What *are* the most effective methods of restoration? Research environmental restoration efforts in your own community or region to see what has worked and what hasn’t. How can the effectiveness of restoration projects be accurately assessed?

### Other Resources

- Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council: <http://www.evostc.state.ak.us/>  
The state and federal agency representatives charged with restoration of Prince William Sound, Alaska.
- Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council: <http://www.pwsrccac.org/>  
Organized after the Exxon Valdez oil spill to provide a voice for communities affected by oil industry decisions.
- The Oil Pollution Act, 1990: <http://www.uscg.mil>  
The U.S. Coast Guard’s site including information about the Exxon Valdez spill as well as the full text of the 1990 Oil Pollution Act.
- Marybeth Holleman: <http://www.marybethholleman.alaskawriters.com/>  
The author’s Web page.

# NATIVE

By Kathryn Miles

## INTRODUCTION

The word “native” has entertained a connotatively rich and varied existence within the American lexicon. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was regularly employed as a derogatory term for indigenous peoples. In the twentieth century, it was reclaimed by American Indians as a way of reasserting their sense of place and rights to land. In ecological studies, the concept of nativeness distinguishes local flora and fauna from invasive species that compromise biome, or to identify unadulterated minerals and soil compounds. In our pop culture lexicon, signs advertising local food such as native corn or oysters indicate authenticity and quality, while claiming nativity for one’s person offers a way of forging a home-made identity and sense of kin.

Native can also denote the natural: that which is local, unadorned, familiar, and true. And it is in that sense the four writers of this section articulate their own sense of nativeness. These writers understand the importance of celebrating rootedness and place. They also understand how difficult it can be to achieve these ideals within an increasingly global infrastructure. As Wendell Berry and Eric T. Freyfogle reveal, transnational economies and indulged consumerism have made it difficult for many people to stay put. Berry notes the very real ways in which pressure to participate in corporate models of business have spurred entire social groups to abandon their homelands in pursuit of subsistence. Freyfogle makes a persuasive case that modern incarnations of manifest destiny and the cult of ownership have led us to destroy the very places that define us.

Writers like Gary Paul Nabhan are all too aware of these effects on a global scale. The son of a Lebanese-American father, Nabhan writes powerfully about the exile experience and the difficulty of losing one’s place. When endured on a cultural or national level, says Nabhan, this homelessness exacerbates political conflict and compromises any attempt at world peace. The solution, he maintains, is one in which every human being has the opportunity to define a personal sense of place. Scott Russell Sanders has learned firsthand how staying put can serve as a much needed remedy to exile and rootlessness. In his concluding essay, he reminds us that staying put can sometimes be the most beneficial—and polemical—thing we can do.

Writing the acknowledgements for *The Future of Nature*, H. Emerson Blake describes each of the book’s six sections as a territory. “Native,” he writes, “reflects the belief of so many *Orion* writers that in order to heal the places we live in we must become a part of them.” Although all four writers in “Native” share this belief, they each offer a unique prescription for becoming a part of place. What unites them is both deceptively simple and long-tried: the idea that ecological wellness depends upon a reinvigorated commitment to community.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & RESOURCES

### “THE IDEA OF A LOCAL ECONOMY”

Wendell Berry

1. Wendell Berry contends that “the ‘environmental crisis’ has happened because the human household or economy is in conflict at almost every point with the household of nature.” How does he support this claim? Are you persuaded? Why or why not?
2. Berry writes that “we live, as we must sooner or later recognize, in an era of sentimental economics.” What does he mean by this? What are the socio-political and environmental consequences of free-market and communist sentimentality?
3. In his essay, Berry outlines fourteen assumptions implicit in corporate ideology. These assumptions, he argues, have created an economy that harms the environment as well as human health and freedom. Select one of these assumptions and investigate its saliency in contemporary corporations. What evidence can we find that this assumption does, indeed, motivate corporate economy?
4. As a correction to the environmental crisis, Berry advocates reclaiming our consumer proxies from corporations and governments. What are some of the specific ways to do so?
5. In the conclusion to “The Idea of a Local Economy,” Berry advocates for participation in neighborhood economies. Investigate the opportunities for buying local in your area. What artisans, farmers markets, and co-ops exist near you? Do they uphold Berry’s idea of viable community?

#### Other Resources

- The Relocalization Network: <http://www.relocalize.net/>  
Organization focused on relocalization (“building societies based on the local production of food, energy and goods, and the local development of currency, governance and culture.”)
- Business Alliance for Local Living Economies: <http://www.livingeconomies.org/>  
Organization that believes “A Living Economy ensures that economic power resides locally, sustaining healthy community life and natural life as well as long-term economic viability”.
- Growing Local Economies: <http://growinglocaleconomies.com/>  
Organization who aim to help local communities become more prosperous by leveraging their assets to support local entrepreneurs.
- World Trade Organization: <http://www.wto.org/>  
The organization which Berry accuses of, overruling “in secret sessions, any national or regional law that conflicts with the ‘free market’”.
- Wendell Berry: <http://www.brtom.org/wb/berry.html>  
An extensive online collection of links, bibliographies, indexes of poetry and titles.

## “THE CULTURE OF OWNING”

Eric T. Freyfogle

1. Paraphrasing the poet Archibald MacLeish, Freyfogle argues that the misuse of nature in America stems from our notion of “liberty”. Trace the ways in which our culture has defined this word. How do these definitions allow for—or even promote—environmental exploitation?
2. In the conclusion to his essay, Freyfogle writes “private property, in truth, is a morally problematic institution in that it gives owners the legal power to harm or restrict the liberties of other people.” Construct an argument for or against this claim.
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of enacting “polluter pays” policies in response to environmental degradation? Are contemporary practices like carbon offset credits an effective way of using harm-benefit protocols? Why or why not?
4. Freyfogle advocates for a “property system” that serves the collective needs of a community and environment. What might such a system of “do-no-harm ownership” look like in the future?
5. Depression-era folksingers such as Woody Guthrie used their music and lyrics as a way of dissenting to the industrial agribusiness that led to the dustbowl. Research some of the folksongs from this era. Do these lyrics support Freyfogle’s argument? Why or why not?

### Other Resources

- The Wilderness Society: <http://www.wilderness.org/OurIssues/Wilderness/act.cfm>  
The Wilderness Society has background information about the Act, as well as the full text.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>  
Details of the Endangered Species Program.
- Archibald MacLeish: <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/47>  
Information from poets.org about the poet MacLeish who wrote about the Dustbowl.

## “LISTENING TO THE OTHER”

Gary Paul Nabhan

1. How does Nabhan characterize his experience as an exile? In what ways is this experience akin to those of the Navajo and Hopi tribes?
2. In the introduction to his essay, Nabhan traces the ‘dissenting voices’ of displaced people. “Their stories,” Nabhan writes, “reveal how racism and social injustice not only hurt individuals and their families, but impair the capacity of those people to adequately care for the land and one another.” What are some of the ways social injustice can lead to environmental degradation?
3. Nabhan draws a direct correlation between a culture’s sense of place and global peace. To this end, he contends that world peace will only be achieved when “people of many faiths and many colors are once again assured the right to celebrate their own distinctive sense of place, not in exile, but at home.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Conduct a close reading of the poems by Mahmoud Darwish and Laila ‘Allush. How do both poets use imagery and form to convey meaning?
5. Nabhan outlines the powerful ways in which Native American lexicons foster land stewardship and community building. Investigate the languages indigenous to your area. How do these place names, as well as the words for local flora and fauna, create meaning? What do these terms say about the value of land and its inhabitants?

### Other Resources

- United Nations Environment Program: <http://www.unep.org/lebanon/>  
Includes an article highlighting the environmental legacy of the Lebanon conflict.
- Republic of Lebanon Ministry of the Environment: <http://www.moe.gov.lb/enveffects.htm>  
Report about the environmental effects of the war (posted 2006).
- The Road Map for Peace: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/20062.htm>  
The U.S. Department of State Web site features information about “A Performance-Based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”.
- Mahmoud Darwish: <http://www.mahmouddarwish.com/english/index.htm>  
The official Web site of the Israeli poet.
- Gary Paul Nabhan: <http://www.garynabhan.com/>  
The author’s official home page.



## “STAYING PUT”

Scott Russell Sanders

1. Most animals—including humans—respond to conflict by exercising either a fight or flight instinct. Sanders, however, advocates for a third response: staying put. What are the dangers and benefits of this response?
2. Sanders argues that rootlessness is a fundamental characteristic of America and its inhabitants. Indeed, he writes, “claims for the virtues of shifting ground are familiar and seductive to Americans, this nation founded by immigrants and shaped by restless movers.” Do you agree with his characterization of Americans? Why or why not?
3. Salman Rushdie advocates for what he calls “the migrant sensibility.” How is this position distinguished from Sanders’ neighbors, the Millers? How might these two stances define our morals and beliefs?
4. Wendell Berry argues that corporate economies compromise the ability for many people to stay put; Gary Paul Nabhan adds that global politics and religious conflict prevent entire cultures from settling in. To what degree then, is Sanders’ theory of “staying put” a viable option for contemporary people—particularly inhabitants of economically depressed areas or compromised landscapes? Have trends towards global citizenry and unsustainable land use made this idea difficult or even impossible? Why or why not?
5. Sanders describes his home ground as a “series of nested rings,” which begin with his house and family and branch out to include the Ohio Valley watershed. Sketch your own home ground. What elements will you include? How do these aspects relate to one another? How does your sketch compare to Sanders’?

### Other Resources

- Scott Russell Sanders: <http://www.scottrussellsanders.com/>  
The author’s home page.