

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

1-1-2015

The Delicate Art of Being: Psychological Responses to Environmental Damage in American Fiction of the 1970s

Andrew Timothy Thomas
University of Mississippi

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/etd>



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Thomas, Andrew Timothy, "The Delicate Art of Being: Psychological Responses to Environmental Damage in American Fiction of the 1970s" (2015). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 1177.
<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/etd/1177>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

THE DELICATE ART OF BEING: PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSES TO
ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE IN AMERICAN FICTION OF THE 1970s

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of English
The University of Mississippi

by

ANDREW TIMOTHY THOMAS

May 2015

Copyright Andrew Timothy Thomas 2015
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

This Master's thesis looks at three works of American literature from the 1970s—James Dickey's *Deliverance* (1970), Cormac McCarthy's *Suttree* (1979), and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977)—with two primary research questions in mind: How do these novels act as responses to the politicization and globalization of the American environmental movement? and How do these novels depict psychological responses to ongoing environmental damage and destruction? This study is particularly interested in depictions of abjected environments inhabited by socially abjected people. Through investigations of ecohorror, ecotrauma, and ecomelancholy as manifested in aesthetic representations of abjected environments, I read these three environmentally aware texts as critiques of American consumerism, imperialism, and industrialism. Literary depictions of devastated, refuse-ridden landscapes inhabited by exploited and marginalized peoples complicate any understanding of the environmental movement as a biocentric deification of nature. These depictions ask us to practice environmentally-aware, ecocentric acts of viewing that illuminate both abjected peoples and the interpenetrability of individuals and their environment, thereby raising questions of environmental ethics and justice. Additionally, by looking at psychological responses to abjected environments and ongoing environmental devastation, I hope to make evident the embodied and affective realities that we share with our environments.

DEDICATION

for MAL

for my family

for Sara

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deepest thanks goes to my director, Dr. Jay Watson, whose patience, guidance, and support—particularly his extensive comments on multiple drafts—helped make this project what it is. My defense committee members, Drs. Ann Fisher-Wirth and Deborah Barker, provided excellent feedback during their seminars where I first tried out some of these ideas as well as during the oral defense.

Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Cristin Ellis who helped me first think through the beginnings of this project in her American literature and ecocriticism seminar.

Lastly, I appreciate the moral support I received on a steady basis from my fellow graduate students and friends, particularly Jacob Agner, Sara Altenhoff, Josh-Wade Ferguson, Sara Gabler-Thomas, Scott Obernesser, and Isadora Wagner.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION: “HOW SAD!” FEELING AND RESPONDING TO ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I: THE CITY OF THE DAMMED: A MODERNIZING SOUTH AND ECOMELANCHOLY IN CORMAC MCCARTHY’S SUTTREE.....	24
CHAPTER II: FORGETTING THE PAST TO REMEMBER THE FUTURE: WORKING THROUGH ECOMELANCHOLY IN LESLIE MARMON SILKO’S CEREMONY.....	59
CONCLUSION.....	86
NOTES.....	90
WORKS CITED.....	98
VITA.....	105

INTRODUCTION

“HOW SAD!” FEELING AND RESPONDING TO ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION

Growing up in Houston, Texas in the 1990s, I frequently saw the effects of suburban sprawl. Houston's lack of zoning restrictions made the razing of forests or the clearing and leveling of fields full of wildflowers for the next subdivision, apartment complex, or retail center commonplace. On more than one occasion I recall my grandmother lamenting “How sad!” when we would drive past a large lot of pine and oak trees in the process of getting bulldozed, piled, and burned. My grandmother's response taught me from a young age that it was perfectly normal to have strong emotional responses to the destruction of surrounding natural environments for the senseless production of evermore housing and cheap strip centers. I do not think that her response was due to the mere fact that forest or pasture was being cleared; rather, it was because this was a regular, ongoing occurrence. As our northwestern corner of Houston proceeded literally to build one strip mall in front of the other, or erect drugstores and grocery stores on opposing corners, it became disheartening to see many of these sit outdated, vacant, and for sale less than ten years later. So rather than a pine forest growing into middle age, an empty husk of a building squatting on a large expanse of concrete served as an ugly reminder that humankind's endless consumptive habits have direct consequences on the nonhuman world. While this aspect of my life did not directly inform my decision to write about psychological responses to damaged environments, it was nevertheless an undeniable presence during my childhood and adolescence that ultimately shaped my adult interests and scholarly pursuits. Ecocriticism has become a theoretical space that links my study of literature with the ways in which I am affected

by and experience the world outside of any text; it allows me to continue to explore the feelings I held in my early life, feelings that continue to shape who I am today.

This Master's thesis looks at three works of American literature from the 1970s—James Dickey's *Deliverance* (1970), Cormac McCarthy's *Suttree* (1979), and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977)—with two primary research questions in mind: How do these novels act as responses to the politicization and globalization of the American environmental movement? and How do these novels depict psychological responses to ongoing environmental damage and destruction? This study is particularly interested in depictions of abjected environments inhabited by socially abjected people. Through investigations of ecohorror, ecotrauma, and ecomelancholy as manifested in aesthetic representations of abjected environments, I read these three environmentally aware texts as critiques of American consumerism, imperialism, and industrialism. Literary depictions of devastated, refuse-ridden landscapes inhabited by exploited and marginalized peoples complicate any understanding of the environmental movement as a biocentric deification of nature. These depictions ask us to practice environmentally-aware, ecocentric acts of viewing that illuminate both abjected peoples and the interpenetrability of individuals and their environment, raising questions of environmental ethics and justice. Additionally, by looking at psychological responses to abjected environments and ongoing environmental devastation, I hope to make evident the embodied and affective realities that we share with our environments. As Patricia Pisters writes, “a mind's capacity for thought is strictly correlated with its body's capacity for interaction with its environment. . . . There is no transcendental preestablished framework of the human subject: it will change according to its relations with its environment and other beings. . . . What affects the body has an effect in the mind” (56).

While it is difficult to begin a discussion of American environmentalism by focusing on any one date, I have narrowed my focus on literature of the 1970s because I, like many, see this decade as a watershed moment in American culture as far as environmentalism is concerned. This decade witnessed the first ever Earth Day on April 22, 1970, a nationwide demonstration that “attracted an estimated 20 million participants” (McKibben 994) who protested the consumptive and industrialist practices that had been part of the Great Acceleration¹ since the end of World War II. There were also the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (1970); the advent of key pieces of legislation such as the National Environmental Policy Act and Clean Air Act (1970), the Clean Water Act (1972), the Endangered Species Act (1973), the Eastern Wilderness Act (1975), the National Forest Management Act (1976); the Love Canal toxic waste incident (1978) and the partial meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant (1979). Additionally, the environmentalist group Keep America Beautiful released the “Crying Indian” ad campaign where an actor dressed in native clothing known as Iron Eyes Cody sheds a single tear at the sight of a despoiled and littered American landscape (1971); the “Blue Marble” photograph of the Earth was taken by the Apollo 17 spacecraft (1972), further driving home the notion of the Earth as a finite thing with limited resources.² Arnae Naess first promoted his concept of deep ecology (1972); atmospheric geochemist James Lovelock and biologist Lynn Margulis published a paper promulgating the Gaia hypothesis theory (1974); Edward Abbey published *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, a novel promoting the virtues of ecoterrorism (1975); inspired by Abbey’s writing, four men founded Earth First!, an organization committed to radical, uncompromising forms of environmental protest (1979).

In general, the process of sifting through the historical precedents that lead to any watershed moment is a process of continual deferral. One cannot fully understand the

environmental events and acts of the 1970s without recognizing the overwhelming significance of the 1960s. But from the 60s, we could look back to Aldo Leopold's publication of *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949. From here we could easily make our way back to John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt, to Thoreau, Emerson, and Audubon, and even back to Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Joni Adamson and Scott Slovic ultimately connect the beginnings of the environmental movement with the abolition movement, claiming that the latter "revealed the connections between colonization, conquest, slavery, resource exploitation, and capital" (5-6) that would later be appropriated into more contemporary environmental rhetoric.

The 1960s is a good starting place to begin searching for the immediate roots of the contemporary environmentalist movement, however, because it is here that "one of [the movement's] founding impulses" becomes most evident; this impulse is "to drive home to scientists, politicians, and the population at large the urgency of developing a holistic understanding of ecological connectedness, as well as the risks that have emerged from human manipulations of such connected systems" (Heise 22). Most significantly, marine biologist Rachel Carson published her seminal *Silent Spring* in 1962 declaiming the widespread and extensive use of pesticides, particularly DDT. With the publication of *Silent Spring*, Carson authored what many consider to be the founding document of the contemporary environmental movement. Carson notes that the pesticide industry is part of post-World War II America's military-industrial complex, pointing out that the industry grew out of and was an extension of the United States' wartime development of weaponized chemicals (15-16). She argues extensively that once pesticides enter into the cycles of ecosystems, they have long-lasting, unintended deleterious consequences. Accordingly, she claims that *pesticide* or *insecticide* is no longer an apt name; these chemicals are *biocides* (8), threatening humans and nonhumans alike.

What is perhaps one of the more significant aspects of Carson's work is that she weds scientific and technological knowledge about the natural world with the earnest concern of an environmentalist. Rather than alienating science from a holistic relationship with the earth, Carson uses her scientific background to expose the ways in which science and technology abuse environments. As Ursula Heise writes, "Scientific assessments of the state of the planet and its future prospects have been one of the most important foundations for the environmentalist movement from the 1960s to the present day" (22). While science and technology are often considered obstructions to holistic relationships with the nonhuman world, it is nevertheless because of scientific advancement that an awareness of an imminent global threat developed.³ The best example of this is the means by which the environmentally-prized "Blue Marble" photograph was obtained—from the apex of modern humankind's scientific and technological achievements, a spacecraft. Apart from Carson's *Silent Spring*, other influential publications were Garrett Hardin's article "The Tragedy of the Commons," published in the journal *Science*, and Paul Ehrlich's bestselling book *The Population Bomb*, both appearing in 1968 and making Malthusian predictions about imminent overpopulation and food shortages.

This project is particularly interested in literature of the 1970s because I am curious to see what environmental stakes these novels hold in a post-*Silent Spring* era. Furthermore, how do these novels compliment, complicate, critique, or extend ideas put forth by the environmental movement that was kicked off in April 1970, but has its roots in the 1960s? Unlike the immediate and catastrophic violence of the atomic bomb detonations, what the rhetoric of the 1960s emphasizes, and what the three novels that I address from the 1970s react to and pick up on, is the insidious, unnoticeable, and long-lasting violence of pollution, contamination, radiation poisoning, and other forms of environmental injustice. None of the novels that I look at directly

deal with environmental cataclysm or apocalypse. While there is brief talk of Cold War nuclear holocaust in *Deliverance*, and the dropping of the two atomic bombs remains persistently present yet on the periphery in *Ceremony*, each text is more focused on slowly *ongoing* forms of environmental degradation and dispossession. Looming in the background of much of this project's research, then, is ecocritic Rob Nixon's work on slow violence. Nixon designates slow violence as that which is imperceptible, and it is the imperceptibility which "decouple[s] [violence] from its original cause by the workings of time" (11). Slow violence is unsensational and nonexplosive; it creeps, seeps, and gradually contaminates, despoils, and corrodes. Nixon notes that his interest in environmental slow violence grew out of his appreciation for Carson's work which focused on "small, domestic choices," the importance of short-term decisions, and how these decisions influence the long term (xi). Her work, he contends, shifts conversations about the natural world from a conservationist mindset to a socioenvironmentalist outlook. By focusing on socioenvironmental accounts of slow violence, Nixon argues that the unseen peoples of the world are the most affected by the slow, unseen violences, because these people are considered "disposable people" (Bales qtd. in Nixon 4). In other words, slow violence disproportionately affects the poor and underprivileged; it affects people and environments that have been abjected by society.

Each of the novels that this study addresses depicts abjected people inhabiting abjected environments: the traditional Appalachian mountain communities in *Deliverance*'s 1970 Georgia; the denizens of McAnally flats in *Suttree*'s early 1950s Knoxville, Tennessee; and the Native Americans living on and around the Laguna Pueblo reservation in *Ceremony*'s late-1940s-early-1950s New Mexico. This study understands abjected environments and people as those which modern industrial society must thrust aside in order to continually define itself and

proceed with what it understands as progress.⁴ These people and environments are modern industry's collateral damage and what Rob Nixon calls "developmental refugees" and "uninhabitants" (152).⁵ While I do not spend a sustained amount of time developing or engaging with Julia Kristeva's theorizing of the abject, I nevertheless find her general concept useful in thinking particularly about how people and places become *abjected*, and how this affects one psychologically. Pister provides a pithy and lucid reading of Kristeva's theory: The abject "constantly threatens life and at the same time makes life possible"; because it is monstrous "it must be 'radically excluded' from the place of the living subject, propelled away from the body and deposited on the other side of an imaginary border which separates the self from that which threatens the self" (47). So in the case of *Deliverance*, the mountain men represent what the clean, proper, heteronormative Atlanta men must thrust aside in order to assume their own subjectivity. The mountain man represents that "which disturbs the system" and constantly threatens the subjectivity of the urban Atlanta men (47). Because the abject represents a zone where boundaries are *blurred*, it is something more than merely the Other. "Although the subject must exclude the abject," Pister writes, "the abject must nevertheless, be tolerated, for that which threatens to destroy life also helps to define life. . . . Although we do not like it, the abject is necessary to define us as subjects" (48). Hence it becomes necessary to look at and closely examine the places and peoples abjected by our society in order to fully comprehend the social and environmental identities that we have constructed for ourselves.

The three novels in this study offer glimpses of three male protagonists and their psychological responses to damaged environments. I do not analyze the novels chronologically, but rather as I see the development of, sustaining of, and working through of psychopathology. The affective response that I pay particular attention to is the melancholic response to unending

environmental destruction, what Jennifer C. James has theorized as ecomelancholy. James nuances the understanding of melancholy by resisting Freud's theorizing of it as a merely debilitating and inhibiting condition that impedes traumatic recovery. Freud, in his essay "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," argues that, in cases "of obsessional neurosis" (149), memories are repressed through an unconscious act of resistance to remembering. "The greater the resistance," he writes, "the more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering. . . . the patient repeats instead of remembering, and repeats under the conditions of resistance" (151). Freud claims that the melancholiac "does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (150).⁶ Of the melancholiac, Dominick LaCapra writes, "the past is performatively regenerated or relived as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription, and it hauntingly returns as the repressed" (70). Additionally, Freud views the experience of loss as something to be eventually overcome through the working through process, when the "deference for reality gains the day" ("Mourning and Melancholy" 284).⁷ James shifts the theory in a different direction by both focusing on the environment as the nexus of loss and suggesting the possibility of ameliorative outcomes from remaining in a melancholic state:

If we take the 'love object' as the natural world, ecomelancholia can be thought of as the inability or *unwillingness* to 'stop mourning' ecological loss and losses associated with 'the land' in a present where loss continues. . . . Ecomelancholia disavows mourning's "renewable" economy and the attendant theory that scarcity mitigates loss. The recovery of lost love objects—disappearing lands, species, finite natural resources, ways of life—would prove impossible in many instances.

There will be no ‘fresh’ objects to replace the natural world, and certainly none ‘more precious.’ . . . *Ecomelancholia’s historical and memorial disposition defends against mourning’s call to prematurely forget.* It responds to the cumulative losses of nature, land, resources, and to traumas tied to those losses, such as death, deracination, and dispossession; it is activated by ongoing and interrelated social and political violence, including catastrophes of war, genocide, and poverty. . . . *Ecomelancholia* refuses to take consolation in fantasies of rectification while destruction occurs unabated. (166-67; emphasis added)

James’s particular nuancing of melancholy is significant to this project because she recognizes ecomelancholy can “[defend] against mourning’s call to prematurely forget.” This is because the loss experienced is not a historical, completed moment in the past, but an ongoing process that is continual and recurring. While I find James’s overall project conceptually fascinating, I do think her interpretation of Freud’s theory needs some qualifying. She claims that ecomelancholia is an “unwillingness to ‘stop mourning’”; it “defends against mourning’s call to prematurely forget”; and it “refuses to take consolation.” All of these notions suggest that ecomelancholia is a willful, conscious, agential act, whereas a melancholic is supremely unconscious and unagential in her repetitive actions. What I find most promising about ecomelancholia, however, is its commitment to ongoingness. But to get to this commitment, the individual must continually work through her ecomelancholia. At the root of ecomelancholia is an understanding that our environments affect us deeply—physically and psychologically—perhaps especially those environments that are damaged, scarred, and despoiled. Therefore, we must first be aware and fully conscious of the fact that we are unable to stop mourning ecological loss if we are to actually do anything about it.

David Kidner, while pointing to some promising applications of psychoanalysis to discussions of one's relationship to the environment, considers the theory generally to entail "an explicit rejection of the natural world as a constituent of individuality" (96). "In classical Freudian psychoanalysis," he writes, "the ego is regarded as striving to outgrow its original connection with nature, suppressing and distorting those arational elements that remain within the psyche" (97). Therefore, the *eco* in ecomelancholy is of utmost importance here because this prevents us from looking at the individual as solipsistically insulated from the outside world; rather, we see that the effects on the human psyche and an individual's psychological responses to those effects are in a direct relation with their environments. The natural and unnatural, biotic and abiotic world is a critical part of human's psychological processes. So rather than "applying an order produced by thought *on to* the world 'outside,'" Kidner argues, "we open ourselves to the natural order, allowing resonances to develop which define our commonality with that order" (289).

In *Deliverance* (1970), Ed Gentry journeys into the wilderness and witnesses abjected peoples in an environment of which they are being dispossessed of by the modern phenomena of river damming, and it is clear by the close of the novel that he is repressing the damage done to him by the damaged environment. *Suttree* (1979) is in close conversation with *Deliverance* insofar as it is a narrative about the lives affected by the modernization of southeastern riverways. But rather than venture into the wilderness, *Suttree* turns primarily to the urban space of Knoxville, and rather than just witness abjected people, he temporarily becomes one, befriending the inhabitants of the industrial wasteland that is McAnally Flats, an "*Encampment of the damned*" (McCarthy 3). At the beginning of the novel it is clear that *Suttree* is melancholic and by novel's end it is unclear whether anything has changed. However, as I will argue in

chapter one, it is possible to read the penning of *Suttree* itself as a communally redemptive act on the part of Suttree; nevertheless, the novel's ending functions more as a *deus ex machina* rather than as a conclusive working through of traumatic issues. *Ceremony* (1977) depicts a biracial Native American, Tayo, responding to the traumas of World War II in addition to the traumatized and traumatizing landscape of his Laguna Pueblo reservation. Tayo is neither witnessing abjected people nor temporarily becoming one—Tayo as a Native American *is* one. While the affirmative ending of the novel offers a clear antidote to the ecomelancholia presented in the other two novels, I raise questions over environmental futures: namely, once a traumatized individual has recovered, how does he heal the land that remains damaged? and how does one maintain psychological health—that is, not relapse into an unconscious ecomelancholia—in light of ongoing environmental devastation?

“The delicate art of the forest”: Ecohorror and Abject Environments in *Deliverance*

This section will briefly consider James Dickey's 1970 novel *Deliverance* as a gateway text into discussing psychological responses to damaged and damaging environments in US literature of the 1970s. *Deliverance* tells the story of four urban-dwelling, middle-class men from Atlanta who attempt to temporarily cast-off the perceived effeminacy of urban life by making weekend plans to canoe down the remote Cahulawasee River before it is dammed and turned into a recreational lake. Their trip turns disastrous when they encounter two mountaineers who brutally rape one of the members of the group, Bobby Trippe, at gunpoint. When group member Lewis Medlock kills the rapist with his hunting bow, he sets in motion a chain of events resulting in his own traumatic injury and the deaths of a mountaineer and one of the city dwellers, Drew Ballinger. The unlikely hero of the group and first-person narrator of the story is Ed Gentry, a heavy-set, balding graphic designer who temporarily shrugs off his urban life of quiet

desperation by rising to the various demands that the wilderness experience presents him. The novel itself is an appropriate work to begin an extended discussion of psychological responses to environments—in this case, horror, trauma, and melancholy—due in part to the narration’s first person point-of-view. As readers, we are in Ed Gentry’s head throughout the novel, witnessing his psychological development, or lack thereof, as he interacts with(in) the Appalachian environs. It becomes increasingly clear toward the novel’s conclusion that he is recounting this story from a considerable temporal distance from the actual events, but he nevertheless remains deeply psychologically affected by his experience that weekend. While Ed ends his story with a triumphalist tone—a tone that suggests he has worked through his past traumas on the river—there is something lurking beneath his narrative that remains unsettling, something that suggests unconscious repression and disavowal. The traumatizing experiences that affect Ed are twofold. The first and most viscerally immediate traumas are his interactions with the mountaineers—from witnessing Bobby’s rape, to being moments away from performing forced fellatio, to killing a mountaineer with his bow and arrow. Venturing into the wilderness in order to reunite with a mythical primal masculinity, Ed is confronted with sexual violence that both feminizes him and illustrates the ambiguity and socially constructed reality of gender and sexuality. What these interactions attest to, and what Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands claims, is that “the categories through which we currently understand sexuality and sexual identity are not ‘natural’. . . . the categories [straight], gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer are not given ‘in nature’” (“Unnatural Passions”). In other words, nature is neither gendered nor gendering, and part of Ed’s trauma is due to the blurring of self and sexual identity that he experiences while on and around the Cahulawasee River. While his experience with the mountaineers is clearly one of the sources of Ed’s trauma, the other source of trauma is more difficult to pin down.

The environments of the Cahulawasee River do not quite fit into an ecomelancholic paradigm primarily because these environs have not been damaged . . . *yet*. While ecomelancholy is a psychological response to ongoing environmental destruction, Ed exhibits what we might consider a pre-ecomelancholy, a psychological condition that recognizes the not-yetness of imminent environmental destruction. Part of Ed's trauma is evidenced in the fact that he is only able to claim the river and its environs—environs he comes to identify with physically, psychically, and sexually during the trip—as “a personal, private possession” (Dickey 240) once the river is completely inundated—that is, covered up, repressed, removed from sight—by the new lake. The river does not become Ed's possession until it is completely lost. *Deliverance* does important work in setting up the other novels discussed in this study because it acts as a canary in the coal mine, signaling that an environmental tipping point has been reached socially and culturally and that all is not well. While Ed Gentry is not an ecomelancholic like Cornelius Suttree or Tayo, he is nevertheless one that is deeply affected and troubled by his environments.

In many ways, *Deliverance* is a novel within the genre of ecohorror. Ecohorror has been traditionally identified with texts where “nature strikes back against humans as punishment for environmental disruption,” but has also been expanded to “[include] analyses of texts in which humans do horrific things to the natural world, or in which horrific texts and tropes are used to promote ecological awareness, represent ecological crises, or blur human/non-human distinctions more broadly” (Rust & Soles 509-10). The imminent environmental disruption present in the novel is the damming of the Cahulawasee River, an act that implies the dispossession and displacement of older, more traditional land-based communities residing far up the river within the mountains. The opening of the novel clearly situates the four protagonists, whether they like it or not, on the side of modernization and, more notably, colonization. Poring over a

topographical map, Ed, Drew, and Bobby watch as “Lewis’ hand took a pencil and marked out a small strong X in a place where some of the green bled away and the paper changed with high ground, and began to work downstream” (Dickey 1). Ed narrates the experience of watching Lewis’s actual “hand rather than the location, for it seemed to have power over the terrain” (1). These four urbanites represent the environmentally dispossessing and violently damaging modernity that is encroaching on more traditional ways of mountain life.

Ecohorror is a genre where nature is depicted as a responsive, retaliatory agent. Fed up with environmental devastation and despoliation, nature lashes back at its aggressors. The primary agent of a violated nature’s response to the intruding city dwellers is the mountaineers themselves. As the landscape’s inhabitants, they are immediately affected by the damming of the river as they will be forced to relocate permanently. It is clear that the contentious legacy of the Tennessee Valley Authority, a subject I will develop in much more detail in the next chapter, overshadows the current dam project, and the four urban men are aware of it. After Lewis has killed the mountain man rapist and the men try and decide what to do with his body, Lewis claims, “there’s a lot of resentment in these hill counties about the dam. They are going to have to be some cemeteries moved, like in the old TVA days. Things like that. These people don’t want any ‘furriners’ around” (106). While I am neither trying to naturalize the mountaineers by merely assimilating them into their environments nor in any way justify or excuse their murderously violent sexual actions, I am trying to draw attention to the social ramifications that arise when environments become disposable places. The mountaineer’s violent assault on Ed and Bobby can be understood as a socioenvironmental response against those representing the violent, modern oppression signified by the dam. Elaborating on their definition of ecohorror, Stephen Rust and Carter Soles argue that the genre “assumes that environmental disruption is

haunting humanity's relationship to the non-human world" (510), and that Ed Gentry is haunted by his experiences in and on the river is clearly the case by the novel's end.

While *Deliverance* is a viscerally physical novel, Dickey places especial emphasis on the psychological responses, particularly Ed's, to the physical reality of being in and engaging with the natural world, a reality that Ed's city-dwelling life has denied him to the point where he feels that he must perform a more traditional, wilderness-type masculinity. Merely riding in a car filled with outdoor gear causes Ed to realize "[he] was not . . . what [he was] before. . . . [He] knew [he] had to live up to the equipment or the trip would be as sad a joke as everything else" (Dickey 30). *Deliverance* explores what happens to the mind when the body is put into direct contact with an exploited environment and taken to its breaking point. While the trip is initially framed as a wilderness experience aimed at recouping some modicum of traditionally rugged masculinity, it is not so much physical but psychological prowess that is ultimately tested (Entzminger 101). Lewis, Ed's close friend, epitomizes hyper-masculinity in the story with his muscle-bound physique, adeptness at bow-hunting, and survivalist mentality. It is Lewis who proposes the canoe trip, clearly allured by the river's wildness and its potential to test true manliness. He asserts that the river is "wild. And I *mean* wild; it looks like something up in Alaska. We really ought to go up there before the real estate people get hold of it and make it over into one of their heavens" (1). When it becomes clear that the river's wildness is threatened by the taming power of dam construction—an alteration that will turn the river into a bourgeois lake-playground, fit only for a distinctly tame, unwild masculinity—Lewis realizes that he has little time to act. It quickly becomes evident that Lewis, apart from and in addition to his outdoor hobbies, is unique among the group of four men in that he is actively discontent—as opposed to Ed's passive discontentedness that I will illustrate shortly—with his middle-class suburban life.

Ed describes Lewis as the “only man [he] knew who could do with his life exactly what he wanted to,” and that he was “determined to get something out life” (3, 4). Bobby, on the other hand, says that such out-of-the-ordinary plans as the canoe trip “[get] hold of middle-class householders every once in a while. . . . But most of them just lie down till the feeling passes” (3), glibly asserting his own contentedness with his sedentary life as an insurance salesman. Ed attests to a similar feeling, albeit more melancholically and philosophically than Bobby, after returning to his office from the meeting with the other three men. He sits at his desk and contemplates a

feeling of the inconsequence of whatever [he] would do, of anything [he] would pick up or think about or turn to see was at that moment being set in the very bone marrow. How does one get through this? [he] asked [him]self. By doing something that is at hand to be done was the best answer [he] could give; that and not saying anything about the feeling to anyone. It was the old mortal, helpless, time-terrified human-feeling just the same. . . . It had [him] for sure, and [he] knew that if [he] managed to get up, through the enormous weight of lassitude, [he] would still move to the water cooler . . . with a sense of being someone else, some poor fool who lives as unobserved and impotent as a ghost, going through the only motion it has. (14-15)

Ed recognizes that his white middle-class life is a life of quiet desperation, an ongoing repetition of the ever-same, and that the primary way to repress feelings of discontent are to willingly continue in cycles of repetition. In a way, Ed is already experiencing a kind of melancholy, a modern middle-class ennui. But what Lewis offers Ed and the other men is deliverance from their mundane lives of atrophied, and ultimately effeminized, masculinity through the canoe trip

and experience of wilderness,⁸ the latter of which Ed later attests offers “no habit” with which he “could call on” (79).

But despite the river being a staging ground for the performance of traditional manly physical pursuits such as canoeing, camping, and hunting, the novel frames the experience of wilderness as a psychological one. During the car ride to the small town of Oree where they intend to put-in with their canoes, Ed and Lewis discuss the possibility of surviving cataclysmic circumstances, particularly nuclear holocaust.⁹ While Lewis thinks that “the whole thing is going to be reduced to the human body,” he nevertheless attests to the psychological preparedness necessary for a life dictated by survival:

I think I am [ready] . . . I sure am, psychologically. At times I get the feeling that I can't wait. Life is so fucked-up now, and so complicated, that I wouldn't mind if it came down, right quick, to the bare survival of who was ready to survive. You might say I've got the survival craze, the real bug. . . . You could make a kind of life that wasn't out of touch with everything. . . . You'd die early, and you'd suffer, and your children would suffer, but you'd be in touch. (Dickey 36, 37, 38)

Part of Lewis's romanticization of pure survival is the fusion that he sees occurring between the self and one's environment, the joining of somatic experience with psychological experience. After over-shooting a young buck while bow hunting their first morning on the river, Ed confesses to the group that he “psyched out” and raised his hand at the last moment of release, to which Bobby responds, “Damn . . . Psychology. The delicate art of the forest” (83). While stalking the deer, Ed's narration offers a clue as to what “the delicate art of the forest” might be: “I concentrated on getting into some kind of relation to the woods under these conditions; I was an invisible as a tree” (80). The “relation” that Ed seeks is not dissimilar from Lewis's being “in

touch.” And yet for Ed, the relation proves to be too psychologically taxing. His aggressive and purposeless act of attempting to kill a deer so as to “satisfy” masculine “honor” is a destructive act that denies relationality (81). The “delicate art of the forest” overwhelms Ed psychologically and he overshoots the deer. By novel’s end it is clear that the “art of the forest” and river have left an indelible impression on Ed, worrying the triumphalist tone with which he concludes his narration.

One of the primary traumas of the novel for Ed and the other urbanites is that neither the river nor the mountaineers play the expected “feminized” role of passively accepting their touristic, invasive penetration and exploration. On the contrary, within the trauma of the rape scene, the mountaineers unman the already effeminate urbanites, Ed and Bobby. The dialogue between both sets of men reveals the mountaineers’ intention to emasculate the city dwellers. The tall, toothless mountaineer, after unsheathing Ed’s knife, asks him, “You ever have your balls cut off, you fuckin’ ape?” (96), implying, if not literal at least symbolic, castration. Bobby is told to remove his “panties” (97), a term typically gendered feminine, before being raped. Theda Wrede captures the essence of Ed’s sexual trauma:

If a regaining of masculinity has been the key concern in the novel so far, the two hillbillies intensify the problem by committing homosexual rape. In forcing Bobby at gunpoint to assume the role of the female and threatening Ed to submit to their violation, they emasculate the city dwellers more profoundly than life in the city could. They at once realize the worst nightmare the wilderness represents and inflate the gender complications (and lacking sense of gender security) on which the novel is based. The novel thus contests simple gender—sex—space associations and opens up a blurring of these dialects. (185)

Ed's trauma, in part, is due to the blurring of once-thought stable boundaries, boundaries that both established and defined his sexuality and personal identity.

While Ed's interaction with the mountaineers is an emotionally traumatizing moment of sexual(ity) violation, he does experience a moment of intense emotional and psychological affiliation with the land itself, an experience that bears weight on his disposition at novel's end. After determining to the best of his ability that the toothless mountaineer who escaped from their initial encounter is responsible for the shooting death of Drew, Ed leaves Bobby and Lewis at the base of a cliff on the river while he scales a nearly sheer rock face in the dead of night in an attempt to ambush the waiting mountaineer the next morning. The terrifying climb up the rock face turns into an ecstatic experience for Ed as he seems capable of attaining a relational status with the cliff that he was not able to establish with the forest when he overshot the deer. Ed narrates: "Panic was getting near me. Not as near as it might have been, but near. I concentrated everything I had to become ultrasensitive to the cliff, feeling it more gently than before, though I was shaking badly. I kept inching up. With each shift to a newer and higher position I felt more and more tenderness toward the wall" (Dickey 141). As Ed continues up the cliff, he experiences an orgasmic-like relation with the rock face, a relation that he claims not even to experience with his own wife: "Then I would begin to try to inch upward again, moving with the most intimate motions of my body, motions I had never dared use with Martha, or with any other human woman. Fear and a kind of enormous moon-blazing sexuality lifted me, millimeter by millimeter" (151). Ed later describes this experience as "mak[ing] love to the cliff . . . fuck[ing] it for an extra inch or two in the moonlight" (152). The intimacy Ed has with the rock face is a precursor to the fusion that must occur between Ed and the mountaineer that he intends to kill: "I had thought so long and hard about him that to this day I still believe I felt, in the moonlight, our

minds fuse. . . . For me to kill him under these conditions, he would have to be thinking as I had thought for him, and not approximately but exactly. The minds would have to merge” (155, 159). Within these scenes, the exertion of both mental and physical energies fuses Ed with his environments and with the mountaineer other. The cliff itself becomes a love object to Ed, but an object that he soon realizes will be irrecoverably lost:

I thought for the first time seriously of the coming destruction of the river, of the water rising to the place I was standing now, lifting out of its natural bed up over the stones that had given us such a hard time in the white water, and slowly also up the cliff, the water patiently and inevitably searching out every handhold I had had, then coming to rest where I was standing in the moonlight. (153)

While Ed is not immediately affected by this realization of the river’s imminent destruction, the scenes leading to this moment nevertheless mark the point in the narrative where he is aware of his embodied experience of place. Ed is experiencing the in-touchness that Lewis longs for with the wilderness experience, and yet it is an in-touchness under threat of being forever lost by the construction of the dam. And yet this loss of the river is necessary if Ed’s tracks are to be covered after killing the mountaineer. Betina Entzminger reads the character of Ed Gentry as one struggling with suppressed homosexual desire, and she views his killing of the mountaineer as an “[attempt] to silence forever his troubling desires and reassert his masculinity” (109). But when Ed falls onto one of his own arrows after killing the man and is penetrated through the back, he wounds himself not only physically but psychically (109). “[T]he figurative wound,” Entzminger argues, “though unintentional, is self-inflicted, indicating the damage caused by the tremendous energy Ed devotes to repression” (109). Ed’s experience of sexual traumas, physical and psychological exertion, fusion, and exhaustion, as well as his witnessing of three deaths and the

developing awareness of the imminent destruction of a landscape that he has come to identify with are all the baggage that he brings back to his everyday, routine life in the city after the river journey is over.

Once Ed returns to Atlanta and reinserts himself into his former ways of life, he is capable of concluding his narration with a long, sensuous meditation on the river itself:

The river and everything I remembered about it became a possession to me, a personal, private possession, as nothing else in my life ever had. Now it ran nowhere but in my head, but there it ran as though immortally. I could feel it—I can feel it—on different places on my body. It pleases me in some curious way that the river does not exist, and that I have it. In me it still is, and will be until I die, green, rocky, deep, fast, slow, and beautiful beyond reality. I had a friend there who in a way had died for me, and my enemy was there.

The river underlies, in one way or another, everything I do. (Dickey 240)

Ed even utilizes the river as a source of inspiration for the collage work that he does, suggesting that he has fully incorporated the trauma to the point where he is capable of turning it into art:

“The river. . . . is always finding a way to serve me . . . in the new collages I have been attempting for my friends. . . . [It is] full of sinuous forms threading among the headlines of war and student strikes” (240-41). Furthermore, the above passage intimates that the river is not lost to Ed at all, but it his possession and his alone, and it “pleases” him that it “does not exist.”

While Ed’s triumphalist tone makes it appear that he has psychologically worked through the traumas he experienced on the river and incorporated these events into his identity, I am not so sure that we should trust his assertions. Rather, it appears that Ed is repressing his experience of

trauma and is stuck in a cycle of repetitive reenactment, otherwise known as melancholy. When Ed first returns to his home after the river trip, he claims that his wife, Martha, and son, Dean, “were going to save” him (234). Normalcy and the return to an orderly, repetitive routine would allow for the possibility of either disavowal, melancholic repression, or both. Ed affirms this when he asserts that “The main thing was to get back into my life as quickly and as deeply as I could; as if I had never left it” (239). In an attempt to forget the trauma experienced on the river, Ed seeks out the repetitive patterns of his former life as if he had never left. He looks for mastery over the traumatizing landscape that was arguably denied him on the weekend journey. The fact that Ed is retelling/reenacting this story from a significant temporal distance literally demonstrates his repetition of the experience. Through his language and continual practice in his artwork, Ed is returning to the scene of the river, still trying to master the experience subconsciously. A telling sign that all is not well is that Ed is only capable of sleeping easy once the entire river environment is completely submerged—read repressed—by the lake: “Every night as the water rose higher I slept better, feeling the green, darkening color crawl up the cliff, up the sides of the rock, feeling for the handholds I had had, dragging itself up, until finally I slept as deeply as Drew was sleeping” (240). The river becomes Ed’s possession insofar that it is an accomplice in covering up both the man that he killed and that it represses the sexuality blurring traumas he experienced. In the novel’s closing pages, Ed relates again what appears to be a compulsive pattern to return to the scene of a dammed lake: “In summer [Martha and I] sit by a lake where we have an A-frame cottage—it is not Lake Cahula, it is over on the other side of the state, but it is also a dammed lake—and look out over the water. . . . Lewis limps over from his cabin now and then and we look at each other with intelligence, feeling the true weight and purpose of all water” (242). Perhaps one of the biggest points of comparison to Ed’s

response to the river is Lewis's new found disposition. At the beginning of the novel, Ed describes Lewis as wanting "to rise above time," and as one who "laborious[ly]" seeks "immortality" (7). But Lewis's body, permanently scarred by his time spent in the river's environs—he "limps" over to Ed's cabin—leads Ed to assert that for Lewis now, "dying is better than immortality" (242). Lewis's experience on the river destabilizes his understanding of masculinity and reaffirms his mortality through the frailness of his physical body. As understood by Ed, this experience has changed Lewis to the point that he no longer sees the need to act out hyper-masculinity. While Lewis also returns to the scene of the water's edge, there is an at-peaceness in Ed's final description of him that is disturbingly missing from Ed's own repressive narrative. As mentioned above, Ed's case is not so much one of ecomelancholia as it is one of a pre-ecomelancholia; Ed is affected deeply by the imminent destruction of an environment. The end of Ed's narrative is a fitting place to begin the discussion of more concrete examples of ecomelancholy. We will see in the character of Suttree a man fully in the throes of repetitious living due to the damaged environments in which we lives. Finally, *Ceremony's* Tayo will illustrate what a true working through of ecomelancholy looks like.

CHAPTER 1:
THE CITY OF THE DAMMED: A MODERNIZING SOUTH AND ECOMELANCHOLY IN
CORMAC MCCARTHY'S SUTTREE

In Marshall Berman's now well-known account of modernity, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, he uses his personal response to the city of New York's decision to demolish the historic Grand Concourse in favor of the new Cross-Bronx Expressway as an example of what he identifies as a necessary symptom of the lived realities of modern life: grief. Of his emotional response to the destruction of his surrounding urban environs, he writes:

As I saw one of the loveliest buildings being wrecked for the road, I felt a grief that, I can see now, is endemic to modern life. So often the price of ongoing and expanding modernity is the destruction not merely of "traditional" and "pre-modern" institutions and environments but—and here is the real tragedy—of everything most vital and beautiful in the modern world itself. (Berman 295)

Because of modernity's unending march towards progress and innovation, and late capitalism's commodification of all facets of life, social, personal, and environmental losses are either deemed necessary for the greater good of modern culture or are essentially replaceable through the purchasing of similar commodities or experiences. For example, one need not mourn the loss of culturally, socially, and spiritually rich land to the floodwaters of dam construction; just think of all the recreational possibilities a new lake promises! Modernity, in its most idealized sense, is an era of possibility and forward-looking development; it is an era that neither bemoans the

collateral damages and losses inherent to industry nor prolongingly or nostalgically reminisces on what once was. Modernity is a hedonistic treadmill of sorts; the new status quo is waiting to be developed and is always just beyond the horizon.

In his examination of Goethe's *Faust*, Berman reveals the downside to modernity's unchecked desire for development. "[T]he developer's tragedy," he writes, "stem[s] precisely from his desire to eliminate tragedy from life" (66). The developer's *hamartia* is his myopic tendency to overlook collateral damage in his quest for his grand vision of a brave new society. This collateral damage, Berman attests, is most often groups of people who become recurrent figures in the history of modernity. They are "people who are in the way—in the way of history, of progress, of development; people who are classified, and disposed of, as obsolete" (67). They are what Kevin Bales calls "disposable people" (qtd. in Nixon 4), and they are engendered through global industry's acts of invisible—read unsensational—environmental violence, creating systems where "pollution follows the poor" (Nixon 274). In an economic model where a society's unending desire to acquire is predicated on the disposability of the status quo, obsolete people, objects, and environments are conflated into one, classified as obstructions to progress, and disposed of as collateral damage. Such people and places matter so little that their elimination is not a big enough event to be deemed tragic; their elimination is necessary to the developer's desire to eliminate tragedy once and for all.

What then, according to Berman, is the developer's tragedy? "It appears that the very process of development, even as it transforms a wasteland into a thriving physical and social space, recreates the wasteland inside the developer himself" (68). If we think beyond individual developers and more towards an ethos of modernity, a process of eliminating tragedy would entail cultivating a disposition to forgetfulness, because an ideal modern sensibility is one that

has been conditioned to forget how to grieve. One of the ironies of modern life, then, is that grief becomes both a response to and product of modernity despite modernity's attempts to do away with it.

There are some questions to consider at this point: What specifically about modernity causes one to experience forgetfulness? Is forgetfulness a foregone conclusion within modern experience, or are there alternative ways of living in a modern world? Can grief itself—that is, the mournful remembrance of lost people, things, and places—act as an antidote to modern forgetfulness, and if so, at what point can one stop grieving? This chapter will attempt to answer these questions by drawing on a notion central to Berman's thesis—that modernity and its effects are felt and participated in through embodied experiences—and by closely examining the environments of Cormac McCarthy's 1979 novel *Suttree*.

Suttree tells the story of college-educated Cornelius Suttree, a man who forgoes a life of affluence in 1950s Tennessee and abandons his family, wife, and infant son to become a sometime fisherman on the Tennessee River. He lives in a houseboat, an intermediary space between the river and McAnally Flats, a subaltern, heavily polluted landscape of Knoxville. Throughout the novel, Suttree experiences seemingly life-changing moments that are either evacuated of meaning or psychically repressed each time he returns to his houseboat. Life on the houseboat comes to represent a developmental stasis as Suttree orbits the hub of Knoxville. The repetitive changing-same, movement-without-progression, motif of the novel is perhaps best embodied by the Tennessee River itself, a river that is “always the same” (McCarthy 194), a notion that is in direct contrast to the Heraclitean maxim that it is impossible to step into the same river twice.¹ *Suttree* is McCarthy's most artistically comprehensive novel, and yet much of the novel appears to be meditations on this Heraclitean maxim, the import of which is relatable

to a discussion of melancholy. Suttree's life is drastically impacted and mirrored by the Tennessee River from which he makes his living. The next section of this chapter will examine the environmental history of Knoxville and the surrounding regions. Suttree is capable of entering the same river twice because the Tennessee River at the time of the novel's setting is no longer a continuously flowing river but rather a dammed chain of lakes regulated by the Tennessee Valley Authority, a governmental entity that fully exemplifies Berman's notion of modern development. The transformation of the Tennessee River into a lake provides a literal counter to the Heraclitean maxim because the river has stopped flowing, and this begs that we examine the psychic and affective responses to the physical realities brought on by modernity. The following section will then look at specific textual examples that establish Suttree as an ecomelancholic. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a consideration of whether or not Suttree has worked through his ecomelancholia by novel's end.

Collateral Damage and the Faust of the South

In order to get a full sense of Suttree's experience in 1950s Knoxville, it is necessary to view the city, its industries, and its immediate and surrounding environments as products of modernity. The city's geographic location alone places it on a conceptual map of modernity. A mere twenty-five miles from Knoxville is Oak Ridge, Tennessee—the site chosen by the federal government during World War II for the establishment of a top secret community composed of civilian workers, government officials, and nationally and internationally renowned scientists whose sole purpose was developing the atomic bomb, a site that thereby epitomizes the apex of modernity's industrial and technological strivings. Additionally, Knoxville's prominent placement on the Tennessee River makes it a city indelibly affected by the industrialization concomitant with modernity. Knoxville's, and Suttree's, place within an overarching industrial

order is due not only to New Deal projects of the 1930s, particularly the Tennessee Valley Authority, but also to an earlier history of logging and railroads. Suttree experiences modernity through his interactions within Knoxville's various environments, and while Suttree navigates his boat through the cast-off man-made objects of consumer culture on a regular basis, the damaged lands and waterways of eastern Tennessee additionally serve as constant reminders of modern industry's exploitation of the natural world. And it is Suttree's psychic responses to this industrial order that get us to the root of his ecomelancholy.

From a historical viewpoint, what is perhaps most significant about Knoxville is its location on the Tennessee River. Much McCarthy scholarship has touched on the role that the Tennessee Valley Authority plays in the novel: William Prather notes that "the novel is intimately grounded in the river affected by TVA development" (30) while Diane Luce points out that in relocating its headquarters to Knoxville, "the TVA brought more dramatic change than the Depression itself" (19). Wilma Dykeman, in her history of the French Broad River (a tributary to the Tennessee that becomes the site of Suttree's midnovel musseling endeavor), identifies the Alcoa Aluminum Company of America plant, the TVA, and Oak Ridge as having "the greatest effect[s] on both [the] city and much of the surrounding country" (278). From an industrialist's viewpoint, the Tennessee Valley watershed was an area teeming with untapped natural resources. From turn-of-the-century logging, to the post-World War I emergence of coal, marble, and textile businesses, Knoxville was a lucrative investment for a variety of industries (Creekmore 226). But as Davis documents, industrial logging and the railroads built in service of the logging industry introduced the greatest wide-scale environmental, cultural, and social changes in the southern Appalachians. With railroads penetrating farther into old-growth forests, areas of wilderness formerly inaccessible to the timber industry because of their distance from

water sources used for transportation, clear cutting began on a massive, unprecedented scale. Because the unimpeded transportation of the felled trees depended on consistently deep waters, and because soil erosion and flooding naturally accompanied the timber industry's rampant denuding of southern Appalachia's wildernesses, there was a "renewed and heightened interest in dam construction and other permanent flood control measures in the southern mountain region" (182), hence the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in 1933.

The feat to be accomplished by the TVA was "to be the largest job of engineering and construction ever undertaken by a single organization in [America's] history" by creating "a series of new lakes with a shoreline of more than ten thousand miles" (Creekmore 230). Such a grandiose developmental goal undeniably places the Tennessee Valley Authority within Berman's rubric of modernity, making the TVA the Faust of the twentieth-century South. Knoxville historian Betsey Beeler Creekmore's somewhat idealistic telling of the vision for and establishment of the TVA provides a striking comparison to Berman's description. Creekmore identifies Nebraskan senator George Norris as the mind behind the bill proposing "new ideas in national planning" (228). While initially basing the flood-controlling, hydroelectricity-producing project out of Muscle Shoals, President Franklin D. Roosevelt envisioned the Tennessee to have widespread effect on the entire region:

the Muscle Shoals development is but a small part of the potential public usefulness of the entire Tennessee River. Such use, if envisioned in its entirety, transcends mere power development; it enters the wide fields of flood control, soil erosion, afforestation, elimination from agricultural use of marginal lands, and distribution and diversification of industry. In short, this power development of war days leads logically to national planning for a complete river watershed

involving many states and the future lives and welfare of millions. It touches and gives life to all forms of human concerns. (Roosevelt qtd. in Creekmore 229)

Spoken in the language of a true visionary, Roosevelt's ideas for development are relentlessly optimistic and expansive. And just as the developers described by Berman "are eager to pit their communal will and spirit against [nature's] own energy, confident they will win" (66), so the developers of the TVA turn their energies towards the Tennessee River. It is worth noting that for Berman's Faust, changes and developments to the material world carry spiritual significance. This echoes Roosevelt's language—namely, that the results of development by the TVA "touches and gives life to all forms of human concerns"—and denotes an affective affinity between individuals and their material environments. While this was undeniably true for some, what of those "disposable people" who were "in the way" of material development? And those affected by modernity's collateral damage? What of their psychological and spiritual condition at the sight of their material world being dammed, flooded, and forgotten? I ask these questions not with the intent of playing environmental Luddite, naysaying all environmental development with special emphasis on the TVA.⁵ Rather, I want to nuance our understanding of the either unforeseen or overlooked results of modernizing an entire region through processes that drastically alter physical environments and, concomitantly, the lives of the people inhabiting them.

Prior to dam construction, the Tennessee River was a continuous, relatively shallow, swiftly moving fluminous system. Mountain people relied on the river for fishing and musseling, the latter of which required shallow waters and was an essential trade in the region prior to the construction of dams (Davis 188-92). When "a specific mandate to provide a 9-foot channel from at least Knoxville to the mouth of the river in Paducah, Kentucky" (184) was made, it was

done so as to “promote the industrialization of the region, as southern factories needed a large and predictable supply of energy to effectively operate” (Davis, “Metropolis” 176). By the end of World War II, the TVA had constructed over a dozen dams along the Tennessee River, the first of which was the Norris Dam (named after the same Senator George Norris discussed above) thirty miles northwest of Knoxville; seven years later, in 1943, the Fort Loudon Dam was responsible for transforming Knoxville’s waterfront into a lake (Davis, *Mountains* 184, Luce 21). By creating a chain of “slack-water lakes” out of the Tennessee River, the TVA made static a once continuously flowing, fluminous ecosystem (*Mountains* 185). Modern industry’s act of breaking the river into static, lake-sized sections now made it quite literally possible to step into the same river twice.

In addition to decimating the native mussel populations and the livelihoods dependent on them, dam construction also unsettled large numbers of people, most of whom were unfairly compensated for their lands on top of being saddled with the financial hardships of having to relocate their generations-old family homes and communities. The lands and smaller waterways flooded by dam construction, Davis writes, “were a living matrix of plants, animals, and shared memories” (*Mountains* 179). The landscapes were not inert bodies of matter simply seen as resources worth extracting or manipulating to the local inhabitants; rather, they were places that coexisted with and shaped the lives of local residents. Such places harbored the economically unquantifiable qualities of spiritual and cultural community.

McCarthy’s first novel, *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), addresses the transition of one east Tennessee mountain community in the 1930s from traditional ways of living to more modern ways. While *Suttree* is set nearly a generation after *The Orchard Keeper*, it is worth noting that the initial actions of the TVA displaced people *into* Knoxville; these unfortunate individuals are,

as *Suttree* describes, “one among a mass of twisted shapes discarded here by the river” (McCarthy 269). Therefore, it is highly likely that these same dispossessed families from *The Orchard Keeper* and their descendants constitute the population of the poorer environs of *Suttree*’s Knoxville.⁶ Once we are aware of the river’s history with the TVA, the novel never quite lets us forget that modern industry is responsible for upsetting formerly meaningful ways of living. Most notably, when Suttree drinks in Ab Jones’s houseboat bar, all of the tabletops are tombstones from graves displaced by dam construction, recalling the initial displacement of families once living and a second displacement after their deaths:

Suttree traced with one hand dim names beneath the table stone. Salvaged from the weathers. Whole families evicted from their graves downriver by the damming of the waters. Hegiras to high ground, carts piled with battered cookware, mattresses, small children. The father drives the cart, the dog runs after. Strapped to the tailboard the rotting boxes stained with earth that hold the bones of the elders. (113)

This passage, recalling Aeneas’ flight from a burning Troy while carrying his elderly father and leading his young son by the hand, bespeaks of generations of people displaced, and ultimately “modernized,” by modernity: the father leads the cart, his children aboard and ancestors’ bones in tow. And yet, while Troy is being attacked by a foreign enemy (the Achaeans), the earlier generations of Knoxville are attacked from a nemesis their own national society has produced, recalling lines from the prologue: “*Like a camp before battle. The city beset by a thing unknown and will it come from forest or sea? The murengers have walled the pale, the gates are shut, but lo the thing’s inside and can you guess his shape?*” (4-5). Suttree, attempting to calm the nerves of a friend (an act that itself illustrates his flatter affective response to grief and loss) unsettled by

drinking off of other people's gravestones, recalls past displacements: "They're just stones. They came off an island down the river before it was flooded" (369). Prather notes that "the gravestones in Jones' tavern clearly point to the history of the TVA. . . . the dispossession of tens of thousands of Valley people and the destruction of a traditional way of life" (29). This scene recalls one of the concluding images in *Deliverance*, when Ed and Bobby see a crew of men unearthing coffins in preparation for the region's damming, to which Ed Gentry says, "Like TVA, I guess" (Dickey 232). Such narratives of in-the-wayness forecast and are implied in the novel's final image of McAnally Flats being razed to make way for a highway system.

In creating "the Great Lakes of the South," dam developers halted and deepened swiftly flowing shallow waters and dispossessed and displaced traditional communities; both of these realities are implied and apparent in *Suttree*. A third and highly noticeable symptom of industrial development in the southeast was the rise in water pollution, an image that the novel foregrounds again and again. While Davis writes that "[w]ater pollution had already become a major problem in the southern mountains by the first decade of the twentieth century, especially downstream from major riverport towns" (190), he goes on to illustrate the greater impact of dam construction on water quality: "The environmental, social, and cultural effects of public and private dam construction on the southern Appalachians cannot be underestimated. . . . The overall water quality of the region's rivers greatly diminished, as did the number of species dependent upon the native river ecosystem" (191).⁷ The novel very quickly and regularly alerts us to the fact that the river is heavily polluted: "*Here at the creek mouth the fields run on to the river, the mud deltaed and baring out of its rich alluvial harbored bones and dread waste*" (McCarthy 4); "The river flowing past out there. Cloaca Maxima" (13); "the river like a serpentine trench poured with some dull slag" (120). If this rise in widespread environmental

pollution is seen as an accompaniment to the ascendancy of modern industry,⁸ and ecomelancholy is an affective response to damaged and polluted environments, we can understand ecomelancholy as both a response to and product of modernity. The “pathology” of ecomelancholy, then, is a sane response to the insanity of rampant, unchecked, hubristic modern industrial development. To understand Suttree’s ecomelancholy, therefore, we must consider and *look at* what kind of environments he is routinely exposed to and so affected by.

“[W]hen the melancholy fit shall fall”: Observing Suttree’s Melancholy

The novel’s use of the river as a physical embodiment of repetition is insightful when paired with Berman’s understanding of modernity as an event that is *experienced*. He writes: “This atmosphere—of agitation and turbulence, psychic dizziness and drunkenness, expansion of experiential possibilities and destruction of moral boundaries and personal bonds, self-enlargement and self-derangement, phantoms in the street and in the soul—is the atmosphere in which modern sensibility is born” (18). Modernity structures feeling, and the experience of modernity has real and lasting physical, emotional, and psychological effects. As will be discussed, the novel’s Tennessee River landscape has itself been heavily influenced by processes of modernization, and it is the river that both affects and mirrors the psyche of Suttree.

While the setting of McCarthy’s novel places us beyond the primary purview of Berman’s examinations of European high modernisms, *Suttree* nevertheless elucidates the overlooked effects of modernism’s late capitalist sensibilities. It is a novel that represents the overlooked collateral damage done to environments and the people who inhabit them, people who, by modern standards, are “in the way.” Additionally, the novel calls into question both modernist and Heraclitian wisdom by offering a narrative of a melancholic man who tries not to participate in the changes and progresses of modern industry. Suttree’s proclivity towards

melancholic repetition stems from an embodied and psychic response to the damaged environments of a modernizing and industrial Knoxville.

One of the central claims of this chapter is that melancholy is an affective response to and inherent part of modern experience because modernity precludes remembering and healthy mourning. For Suttree, the Tennessee River appears to be his River Lethe. His repetitious life on the Tennessee may stem from his guilt of surviving his stillborn twin brother or guilt from deserting his wife and child; regardless, Suttree relies on the river to function as his antidote to memory. The river, one that is “always the same,” mirroring Suttree’s psyche, is the physical site where he acts out his melancholia. Within the river itself are embodiments of the repressed that ceaselessly return: the city’s waste does not disappear but composes the surface phenomena of the river throughout the narrative; a suicide, mirroring Suttree, is pulled from the river in the opening pages of the novel; after helping his friend Leonard dispose of his long-deceased father in the river, Leonard later reveals to Suttree “He come up, Sut. Draggin all them chains with him” (McCarthy 417). By novel’s conclusion the possibility remains that he is still acting out, never having worked through his melancholia, repressing his losses all along.

Suttree’s melancholy undoubtedly stems from a variety of losses, but this chapter’s discussion would like to locate one of those losses within his surrounding physical environments. That is, what happens when we take the physical environment not as an emblem of loss, but as *the* loss, as James suggests? If the damaged environments that Suttree inhabits are the lost love object, then the melancholy that Suttree is experiencing is more precisely ecomelancholy. The repetitive acts of modern industry on Suttree’s environment create his ecomelancholy, and through an examination of his experiences among Knoxville’s damaged and refuse strewn regions, we will get to the root of his condition.

Before I provide specific textual analysis of Suttree's ecomelancholy, I would like to note that an ecomelancholic reading of the novel participates in and supplements current McCarthy scholarship in two primary ways. First, Suttree is undoubtedly a melancholic subject, and it is already acknowledged among scholars that McCarthy has a penchant for creating melancholic protagonists. While recognizing Suttree as "more sophisticated and reflective than McCarthy's other characters" due to his having "a more effective array of human resources" (70), Vereen Bell, in *The Achievement of Cormac McCarthy*, attributes "Suttree's voluntary passiveness" throughout the novel to "his way of living in the presence of death in the ordinary world" (97). Similarly, in *The Pastoral Vision of Cormac McCarthy*, Georg Guillemin reads Suttree's "fixation on death" as the cause behind his "melancholy point of view" (9). McCarthy's protagonists, Guillemin writes, are "unreflective nomads [who] represent a melancholia that they do not contain within themselves" (10); they "succumb to melancholia" upon the unconscious recognition of the emptiness of the pastoral tradition (4). Guillemin elaborates:

In discussing McCarthy's aesthetic, it is essential to note that the melancholia underlying the narrative process does not originate in pastoral nostalgia. On the contrary, the pastoral theme of loss seems chosen as a suitable articulation of melancholia as such. Melancholia appears in McCarthy's writings in the form of an obsession with death or mortality, as well as in a consistent maintenance of narrative distance. (6)

I concur with Guillemin, and ecomelancholy should also not be confused with "pastoral nostalgia"; rather, it is part of a deeply-rooted grieving process that is triggered by the destruction, devastation, and/or dispossession of environments that one has personal, communal, cultural, or spiritual ties with regardless of traditional forms of pastoral significance. And this is

precisely why *Suttree* may be the most appropriate of McCarthy's novels to a discussion of ecomelancholy: it is an urban novel that is relentlessly antipastoral. While Suttree occasionally takes respite from the wastelands of McAnally Flats through seemingly pastoral trips upriver or into the mountains of eastern Tennessee, his stays in such regions do not last. The narration's description of the way in which Gene Harrogate, Suttree's comically and lovably scheming younger friend he meets on a convict labor farm, reacts to traditional images of pastoral settings could just as easily describe Suttree's own feelings: "On the hill above him he could see the brickwork of the university and a few fine homes among the trees. . . . [He] studied the landscape beyond. A patch of gray corn by the riverside, rigid and brittle. A vision of bleak pastoral that at length turned him back toward the city again" (McCarthy 99). Until his final departure from McAnally, and presumably Tennessee, at novel's end, Suttree repeatedly returns to the city of Knoxville, reinhabiting the damaged environs around his houseboat.

By reading Suttree as one engaged with ecomelancholy, we are able to remove him from the cast of affectively flat or voluntarily passive protagonists that current McCarthy scholarship casts him in and view him instead as one *psychically sensitive to degraded environments*. While I realize that melancholy itself is an affective distancing from emotion, ecomelancholy is triggered by damage done to one's environment, therefore requiring an immediate awareness, albeit an unconscious one, and response to one's embodied experience. Ecomelancholy moves us beyond the more common existential, immaterial interpretations² of McCarthy's troubled protagonists and asks that we also consider the physical world as playing a vital role in the shaping of his characters' psychological lives. In other words, it recognizes Suttree as engaged with the material and brings him down to earth.

What is perhaps most crucial to the understanding of (eco)melancholy is that it is a state of being that is *unconscious* to the fact of its own being. As discussed in the Introduction, repetition replaces remembering. Freud's assertion is that the melancholic individual "does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" ("Remembering" 150). So Suttree's psychic sensitivity to degraded environments allows him to at least sense what he does not fully remember, what he has forgotten without knowing it. Ecomelancholy grants him the affective or sensory access to what it is blocking from his conscious awareness, and that is the traumatic loss he experiences from inhabiting environments where damage and devastation continues unabated—the lost love object is an environment free from the unthinkable damage caused by modern industry's blind march towards progress. So while Suttree is unwilling to let go of this traumatic loss, because he is ecomelancholic, he is unconscious of this unwillingness to let go because, as Freud attests, he does not remember that he has forgotten and repressed the loss itself.

While the river may appear to function as an environment of intentional forgetfulness or new beginnings for Suttree (I argued as much above), it is important to remember that no environment is an ahistorical place of forgetting. Traditional pastorals often belie (through forgetting) the lived realities of rural laborers or the already blurred boundaries of nature and culture, placing the days of authentic communion between humankind and nature in the ever receding past. The hypothetical pastoral is never to be located in history, but only in the past. Within *Suttree*—as well as the rest of McCarthy's oeuvre—there is no pastoral, ahistorical *there* to escape to. As the novel makes readily evident, the machine is alive and well in the garden, and environments bear bodily scars and wounds—on the soil, waterways, airways, and peoples

themselves—that bespeak narratives of current and past violences.³ These are narratives of “dead spaces shaped by constriction and want” (McCarthy 29), and it is the ascension of modern industrial practices and the planned obsolescence inherent to mass production that has done the shaping. Suttree finds himself in such a dead space after a night of heavy drinking:

He lifted his swollen eyes to the desolation in which he knelt, the ironcolored nettles and sedge in the reeking fields like mock weeds made from wire, a raw landscape where half familiar shapes reared from the slagheaps of trash. Where backlots choked with weeds and glass and the old chalky turds of passing dogs tended away toward a dim shore of stonegray shacks and gutted auto hulks. He looked down at himself, caked in filth, his pockets turned out. He tried to swallow but his throat constricted in agony. Tottering to his feet he stood reeling in that apocalyptic waste like some biblical relic in a world no one would have. (80-81)

This environmental dead space, recalling Fitzgerald’s “valley of ashes,” tells the story of modern industry’s relegation of certain areas and groups of people to dumping grounds for the sake of progress. The presence of the common noxious weeds, nettles and sedge, speak to the poor quality of the soil—even the weeds are dying (“Cyperaceae”). The mixture of trash with slag, the byproduct from ore smelting, underscore that this is a castoff landscape meant to be a permanent holding space for what society abjects. The “half familiar shapes” in the trash, presumably former commodities disposed from circulation, and the “gutted auto hulks” bespeak the throwaway culture engendered by postwar mass production. This scene, like countless others throughout the novel, illustrates that waste does not simply disappear; rather, it is disproportionately, if not exclusively, cast off into environmental spaces that affect the poor in society, those only able to live in “stonegray shacks.” Such a narrative of the land insists on

being remembered and retold. These abjected environments are inhabited by Bales's "disposable people" and Berman's "people who are in the way," with whom Suttree has chosen to associate himself. This scene is emblematic of the other environs of McAnally Flats, places that have their own narratives of continual and perpetual loss. Late capitalism's effects on Knoxville and the surrounding areas have created these environment-based narratives that structure and sustain Suttree's ecomelancholy and incite his acts of repetition, and, as we will see, also provide a possibility of eventual recovery.

The second way in which an ecomelancholic reading interacts with current McCarthy scholarship is that it asks that we rethink J. Douglas Canfield's Bakhtinian interpretation that views the novel's depictions of the grotesque and abject as regenerative through the use of humor. Canfield explains that

what repeatedly redeems both the figure of Suttree and his novel from abjection is laughter. . . . The [novel's] humor is not nihilistic but celebratory, salvific in and through its risibility. . . . Amid the ubiquitous, grotesque abjection of *Suttree*, then, there is abundant carnivalesque humor. . . . Like Harrogate in his caves and Suttree in his dreams, we descend into the abject only to be regenerated by humor. (686-91)

Ecomelancholy complicates this otherwise convincing reading by preventing us from being too quick to reframe the conversation from within the context of abject humor, and it insists that there is something ethically appropriate in registering the pain induced by abject environments. Ecomelancholy makes us consider that perhaps we are not meant to be immediately redeemed or regenerated, as Canfield puts it. In placing both its protagonist and audience members side-by-side with the abjected things and people of Knoxville, *Suttree* illustrates how ecomelancholic

texts insist that readers examine aesthetic representations of the abject, and these observations might otherwise be overlooked if we move too hastily from traumatic depictions of the abject to humorous ones.

Central to a discussion of *Suttree*, and modernity in general according to Berman, is the experience of seeing: witnessing that which is visible and invisible, readily apparent or occluded. *Suttree* foregrounds what a prototypical modern Knoxville man—be it *Suttree*'s lawyer father or a Tennessee Valley Authority developer—“does not see: what human realities [they refuse] to look at, what potentialities [they] cannot bear to face” (Berman 66). Ultimately, the novel *Suttree* asks us to see with new eyes. McCarthy's meticulous attention to detail in depicting panoramas of abjected landscapes littered with castoff things and people demonstrate the importance of witnessing for developing intersubjectivity and empathy, both of which can be found in latent form in the ecomelancholic.

As I noted in the opening of this chapter, throughout the novel *Suttree* experiences what many would consider life-altering or otherwise meaningful events. He spends time on a convict labor farm; he witnesses the burial of his infant son and the death of a lover in a rockslide; he convalesces in a hospital ward after having a floor buffer slammed on his head in a drunken bar fight; he treks into the Great Smokies with few provisions, prophet-like, starving himself *en route* to mountaintop revelations; he abandons a lover on the roadside after a violent confrontation; he convalesces a second time, recovering from typhoid fever. However, after each event, *Suttree* returns to his houseboat, a gesture that seems to evacuate the previous experience of any meaning. These events are either unregistered by *Suttree*, or they are stoically repressed, the latter being a melancholic act that distances one from normal affective responses to traumatic

events. In addition to experiencing personally traumatic events, Suttree is surrounded by traumatized and traumatizing physical environments.

Suttree unabashedly deals in trash, refuse, and detritus. McAnally Flats is introduced as “*a world within a world*,” something that “*the righteous see from carriage and car*,” a detail that implies social acts of mental and physical distancing and privileged disavowal (McCarthy 4). Suttree’s fellowship is made up almost exclusively of the socially outcast—those who have been abjected, overlooked, silenced, and forgotten by an industrial and modernizing atomic-age society. In addition to his perambulations in and around Knoxville’s seamier regions, Suttree inhabits, navigates and, perhaps most crucially, witnesses a heavily polluted fluminous ecosystem, one that is still contaminated by the effects of logging, river dredging, and damming. Because he chooses to inhabit the margins of society, Suttree experiences firsthand the environments of the poor: infested habitations, rotting and festering dump grounds, contaminated waters, and polluted air. Within Knoxville’s capitalist industrial society, where turnover-rate, commodification, planned obsolescence, and perpetual economic growth reign supreme, waste is inevitable. What *Suttree* makes abundantly clear through its incessant foregrounding of abjected things and people is that waste, though it may be removed from sight and conscious thought, never disappears. Perhaps it dissolves, disintegrates, decomposes, or is detrimentally disseminated, but one thing is for certain: waste persists. “Everything must go somewhere,” ecologist Barry Commoner asserts, so “[w]aste is an illusion” (qtd. in Stoll 14). The novel says as much in its prologue where the narrator suggests both the literal inability to permanently eliminate waste and the metaphorical inability to repress: “*Beyond in the dark the river flows in a sluggard ooze toward southern seas . . . afreight with the past, dreams dispersed in the water someway, nothing ever lost*” (McCarthy 4). Waste is not eliminated, it is merely displaced, and it

is often those marginalized peoples of society who are forced to confront the rest of society's waste and live in the devastated environments that are by-products of modern industry. This section is particularly interested in Suttree's confrontations with the abjected environs of McAnally Flats and greater Knoxville. Natasha Seegert, in "Dirty Pretty Trash: Confronting Perceptions through the Aesthetics of the Abject," argues that a "trauma of confrontation" occurs when one encounters the abject (1). Such encounters make visible the invisible and force the viewing subject to recognize "relationality with an other that is really an extension of the self" (2). For the ecomelancholic subject, however, this in-between state of interrelation is already a foregone conclusion. Rather than positing a subject/object opposition as Kristeva does—"to each ego its object, to each superego its abject" (2)—ecomelancholy sees a relational fluidity. So rather than horror, surprise, disgust, or exhilaration, Suttree displays a noticeable lack of confrontation and affective distancing.

If we are to find where Knoxville's waste goes, we need only look at the environs surrounding Suttree's home: as the above quote demonstrates, it is "a raw landscape where half familiar shapes reared from the slagheaps of trash. . . . [An] apocalyptic waste . . . in a world no one would have" (McCarthy 80-81). In this Knoxvillean waste land, humans are denied ontological privilege, and are simply "one among a mass of twisted shapes discarded here by the river" (269). One of the novel's more poignant examples of this ontological reality is the opening image of Suttree gazing into the water and seeing his image reflected back at him amidst the detritus that has slid down from the city. In this opening scene, McCarthy depicts an "optical democracy," an ontologically horizontalizing concept he develops in *Blood Meridian* but introduces in its nascent form here in *Suttree*. After the novel's brief, yet dense, prologue, the first image the novel's narration offers is of a person studying his environment: "Peering down

into the water where the morning sun fashioned wheels of light, coronets fanwise in which lay trapped each twig, each grain of sediment, long flakes and blades of light in the dusty water sliding away like optic strobes where motes sifted and spun” (7). This opening glimpse of an individual—we are not told it is Suttree for another two pages—directs our attention to his literally narcissistic gazing into the water; furthermore, the narrative’s attention to and poetic rendering of naturally occurring sediment on the surface of the water signal that this is perhaps a novel written in the environmental tradition where a solitary male observer—a Whitman, Thoreau, Muir, or Abbey—leans and loafers at ease, remarking on the physical world underdeveloped by industry, using these observations as a springboard for transcendental or emotional considerations. Ecocritic Lawrence Buell characterizes such a tradition as an “individualized voice contemplating a scene *from a certain emotional distance* that it wishes to bridge” (19; emphasis added). Distance is the operative word here—the implied distance between subject and object, observer and observed, the individual and his surroundings. This first, seemingly pastoral reading is quickly displaced by the narrative’s second rendition of Suttree’s gaze, one that is complicated by the presence of man-made detritus and the undeniable presence of an other. It is a reading that implies the distance has already been bridged:

With his jaw cradled in the crook of his arm he watched idly surface phenomena, gouts of sewage faintly working, gray clots of nameless waste and yellow condoms roiling slowly out of the murk like some giant fluke or tapeworm. The watcher’s face rode beside the boat, a sepia visage yawning in the scum, eyes veering and watery grimace. A welt curled sluggishly on the river’s surface as if something unseen had stirred in the deeps and small bubbles of gas erupted in oily spectra. (7)

Note that Suttree reclines with his head casually cradled in his arm crook. Rather than physically withdraw his face from the river's surface and waste, he comfortably positions himself so as to get a closer look. The unmistakable allusion to Narcissus reveals not only that Suttree is gazing into a biotic world inundated with the unwanted effluvial by-product of a post-World War II industrial city, but that he stares into his own image projected back to him out of the selfsame waste, a stare that is neither excited nor disgusted but merely idle and melancholic

On the one hand, this passage illustrates that there is no distance to bridge between the viewer and the viewed, that intimacy is immanent to Suttree's experience of place. His image is inextricably embedded within his polluted environment, the presence of the waste tarnishing nothing of his viewing experience. The narrative gives both descriptions of the river's surface equal ontological weight: the twigs and sediment are a part of the Tennessee River's ecosystem just as much as the yellow condoms, clumps of sewage, and Suttree himself. The boundaries of self and not-self, natural and manmade, are aqueous. Furthermore, the unstable, bleeding qualities of these boundaries are typified in the novel's other protagonist, the river itself, leading Suttree to conclude late in the novel, "The color of this life is water" (415). The deep stirring gas bubbles suggest that suppressed memories and industrial waste—the personal, subjective experience of the environment as well as the actual condition of nature as a 'thing itself'—are part and particle of Suttree's experience of place. On the other hand, this opening mirror image of Suttree and not-Suttree bespeaks an unbridgeable distance between viewer and viewed, and suggests that any truly intimate or holistic experience with the nonhuman is an impossibility. And rather than the river being an unstable entity, it is an impounded, static lake filled with the castoff byproducts of modern industry.

A mere pages after this foregoing scene, and after Suttree has removed a hooked fish from his trot lines, the novel underscores his lack of affective response when he sees the uncanny repetition of his just-completed action: a search crew hoists a recent suicide out of the water by a grappling hook. Suttree notices that the dead man “wore his watch on the inside of his wrist as some folks do or used to and as Suttree passed *he noticed with a feeling he could not name* that the dead man’s watch was still running” (10; emphasis added). Perhaps Suttree experiences this “feeling he could not name” precisely because he cannot remember it and has repressed it but nevertheless repeats this feeling in his day-to-day life. The only response elicited from an onlooking friend’s conversational “That’s a bad way to check out” (10) is a terse “Let’s go.”

In such moments where Suttree experiences the abject environments of Knoxville, where corpses are raised from the river as he would raise a fish, we should expect horror as an affective response from Suttree. Kristeva writes that “the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. . . . How can I be without border?” (3-4). Nevertheless, Suttree remains unaffected. A prominent moment where Suttree experiences a type of borderlessness with the material world comes during his hike into the Smoky Mountains. While this scene is tempting to read as a restorative journey into the wilderness, a mountaintop revelation that enlightens one towards ultimate transcendence, it is only one event among many in Suttree’s life, having seemingly no more significance than a drunken night’s escapades. While implicitly acting as a critique of the pastoral tradition, the scene nevertheless connects Suttree’s recognition of the certainty of death with an intimate experience of the biotic world. And once again, rather than abject horror, Suttree reacts with understated acceptance to the realities of the material world:

He looked at a world of incredible loveliness. . . . Everything had fallen from him. He scarce could tell where his being ended or the world began nor did he care. He lay on his back in the gravel, the earth's core sucking his bones. . . . His fingers clutched up wet handfuls from the bar, polished lozenges of slate, small cold and masled granite teardrops. He let them fall through his fingers in a smooth clatter. He could feel the oilless turning of the earth beneath him and the cup of water lay in his stomach as cold as when he drank it. (286)

This fusion with nature is very unmetaphysical; his borderlessness does not put him in a state of mind to “care” where he “ended or the world began.” Additionally, the tactile and sensory descriptions point towards the material and embodied nature of this experience. And it is only a page after this experience that Suttree sees “with a madman’s clarity the perishability of his flesh” (287). So in a moment that might prompt transcendental abstraction—think Emerson’s transparent eyeball—Suttree embraces the faithfulness—the readily apparent being-ness—of the material earth, what the narration later identifies as “the fidelity of this earth he inhabited” (354). It is such certitude of the earth’s materiality that prompts Suttree’s assertions of his own existence—“At least I exist,” and “I’ll tell you what I’m not. . . . A figment” (288-89)—as well as his definite realization of his own transience—“He was seized with a thing he’d never known, a sudden understanding of the mathematical certainty of death” (295). While his material fusion with nature reveals death, there is also a relational intimacy between Suttree and the environments that he inhabits so that he is able to hold in tension that fact that he materially exists and that death is ultimately imminent. But by recognizing the naturalness of death, borderlessness need not be an ontological state of horror that merely points towards death; rather, borderlessness can point elsewhere. As Suttree’s Heraclitean proclamation towards the novel’s

end attests, that “Nothing ever stops moving” (461), we are reminded of the fact that nothing—trash, detritus, bodies—actually disappears, but it all proceeds, as Whitman says, “onward and outward, nothing collapses, / And to die is different from what any one supposed” (19). In other words, “the oilless turning of the earth” continues unabated. If Kristevan horror arises out of borderlessness, for Suttree, abject horror and gestures of abjection are not readily apparent in the above scene. Suttree is unperturbed by the ontological and existential slippage that the abject, signified by waste or corpses, supposedly creates. Rather, abjected environments are at the root of his affective distancing.

When Suttree returns to Knoxville after his trip into the Smoky Mountains, he reinhabits his former ways of life, apparently none the wiser from his excursion. When the ensuing late spring’s rains flood the region, the narration depicts the flotsam and jetsam within the flood waters, of which Suttree is merely one object among countless others, a depiction that functions as a microcosm of the very social order of Knoxville:

Bearing along garbage and rafted trash, bottles of suncured glass wherein corollas of mauve and gold lie exploded, orange peels ambered with age. A dead sow pink and bloated and jars and crates and shapes of wood washed into rigid homologues of viscera and empty oil cans locked in eyes of dishing slime where the spectra wink guiltily. One day a dead baby. . . .

Oaring his way lightly through the rain among these curiosa *he felt little more* than yet another artifact leached out of the earth and washed along, draining down out of the city. . . . Suttree among the leavings like a mote in the floor of a beaker. (306; emphasis added)

This image of societal run-off anticipates one of Suttree's later rambles down a Knoxville street where he yet again encounters "all this detritus slid from the city on the hill" (411). The microcosmic scope of the former passage and the biblical and nationalist underpinnings of the latter not only emphasize the environmentalist rhetoric that asserts "We all live downstream"⁴ but also reveal the dark underbelly of the postwar American consumerist dream. In his confrontation with the detritus of Knoxville, Suttree is again affectively, ecomelancholically distant, in that he feels like "little more than yet another artifact leached out of the earth and washed along."

David Holloway reads this scene in conjunction with "Suttree's death visions, and the existential loss of self that accompanies them," and views this as "the ideological concomitant of life lived within . . . the commodity landscape, where people themselves are bits of matter . . . where human life is always liable to that moment of existential slippage when existence will be figuratively buried under mountains of trash" (117). This is a horizontalized way of viewing the world, of seeing oneself as merely an object among a countless sea—or river in this instance—of objects. And yet, while Holloway recognizes that Suttree is repeatedly cast as one object among many, he complicates this reading by noting that the narration "stress[es] the return of a human physicality distinct from the realm of objects in which [he] is embedded. The writing works hard at reestablishing the human as an agent inserted into the commodity-world, a human presence to which that world is now forced to answer" (119-20). As Holloway argues, the fact that Suttree willfully and intentionally oars his way through the flood's debris places a primacy on the subjecthood of the human individual, underscoring the existential nature of Suttree's melancholy. While appearing *like* an object, Suttree is nevertheless a subject capable of navigating his way through and around a commodity landscape.

While I find Holloway's economistic reading viable and intriguing, it misses the deeper environmental implications that an ecomelancholic reading picks up on. For Suttree, his view of life is not accompanied by anxiety over "existential slippage" or loss of subjecthood when he is confronted with the cast-off, abjected objects of modern industry. For one thing, what if these objects are no longer commodities but simply objects constituting the environment? As Patricia Yaeger observes, "Detritus is the opposite of the commodified object" (335) because it no longer participates within the system by which and for which it was created. Outside of an economic system based on the mass production and selling of goods, objects-become-detritus are deterritorialized from their trade-value. Ultimately, in a modern industrial landscape, this makes the ability to "distinguish between trash, nature, and culture" indistinct if not impossible (333), making it necessary that we reconceptualize our understandings of modern industrial landscapes and the possibilities of differing affective responses to them.

Bookending the narrative of *Suttree* are affective responses to corpses. If we compare the experience at the opening of the novel where Suttree witnesses the suicide being pulled from the water with his final contemplation of a corpse in his houseboat, we are confronted with nearly identical responses, implying that Suttree has failed to work through the traumatic loss that is a precondition to his ecomelancholy. When Suttree returns to his houseboat after recovering from typhoid and finds a man sleeping on his cot, he uncovers the man to find a fly covered corpse: "Suttree stepped back. Caved cheek and yellow grin. A foul deathshad bald with rot, flyblown and eyeless. He stood against the wall as long as he could hold his breath. A mass of yellow maggots lay working in one ear and a few flies rattled in the flesh and stood him off like cats. He turned and went out" (465). At this point, a mere pages from the novel's end, we again witness Suttree neither abjecting nor turning away from a decaying corpse; rather he *looks* at it "as long

as he can hold his breath,” and witnesses the natural process of decay. As gruesome as the description is, it is not grotesque, and the prosaic language indicates there is nothing existentially alarming or affectively horrific about the corpse for Suttree. One could argue that this illustrates Suttree’s attunement to the rhythms and processes of natural environments and his recognition that death is a continual, ongoing process that does not infect life but is a constituent part of it. But the question still remains whether or not Suttree is consciously aware of this attunement. With the novel’s concluding image being the wholesale razing of McAnally Flats for urban renewal and the final narratorial exhortation being “Fly them,” a command that implies decamping and fleeing from a thing in pursuit, there is little evidence suggesting that a productive working through of Suttree’s ecomelancholy has occurred. Nevertheless, I now turn to the final section of this chapter to offer one possible reading of the novel that suggests the possibility of a Suttree-turned-artist having indeed worked through his trauma in the very process of writing his autobiography.

“[A]nd the river was always the same”: Repetition with a Difference?

One problem that I see facing any theorizing of ecomelancholy is the question surrounding recovery. As noted above, Freud claims that when the “deference for reality gains the day,” the melancholiac finds a new love object. Within an ecomelancholic framework, however, the question that arises is what could possibly be the new love object if the lost object is the damaged world itself? What is there to replace it with? James’s theory delays Freud’s “deference for reality” in the face of ongoing environmental devastation, and yet it never offers what working through looks like for the ecomelancholic. Her theoretical reinvisioning of melancholy is both admirable and necessary if humans are to recognize the various exploitive and damaging ways in which we inhabit our environments; but for one to be a fully functioning

and active member in society—especially considering that the locus for affecting the most widespread and lasting environmental change occurs in the social sphere through legislative actions—ecomelancholy must have an end game. Ultimately one must forget so as to move forward. In this final section, I would like to take the argument beyond James’s theorizing and consider how one might actually *work through* the psychological experiences of environmental loss and move forward. I contend that one can work through ecomelancholy and also maintain an ethical relation with the environment by *consciously and agentially* refusing to let go of or forget the past trauma, very different from being in an unconscious state that does not remember the past trauma that it is unwilling to forget.

Marshall Berman’s anecdote about the destruction of a beloved neighborhood for the advent of the modern highway system that I opened this chapter with provides an interesting point of comparison with the conclusion of *Suttree*. When Suttree escapes from the hospital after recovering from a bout of typhoid that nearly kills him, he reflectively rides in the car with his friend, J-Bone. As he looks out the window he witnesses firsthand urban renewal and the midcentury intensification of American highway development, an image that not only coincides with Berman’s anecdote on the demolition of the Grand Concourse⁹ but is also a forerunner to the nationwide construction of highways under the National Interstate Highway and Defense Act of 1956. “They’re tearing everything down, Suttree said. Yeah. Expressway. . . . New roads through McAnally, said J-Bone” (463). Two closing images of the novel depict Suttree yet again watching industry-led changes to his environments:

The destruction of McAnally Flats found him interested. A thin, a wasted figure, he eased himself along past scenes of wholesale razing, whole blocks row on row flattened to dust and rubble. Yellow machines groaned over the landscape, the

earth buckling, the few old coalchoked trees upturned and heaps of slag and cellarholes with vatshaped furnaces squat beneath their hydra works of rusted ducting and ashy fields shorn up and leveled and the dead turned out of their graves. (464)

Traffic was slow along the road and he was there a long time. . . . Across the road a construction gang was at work and he watched them. A backhoe was dragging out a ditch and a caterpillar was going along the bank with mounds of pale clay shaling across its canted blade. Carpenters were hammering up forms and a cement truck waited on with its drum slowly clanking. Suttree watched this industry accomplish itself in the hot afternoon. (470)

It is with this final image of the Knoxville landscape that the novel leaves us. And while Suttree is actually “interested” in what he sees, a surprising change from his typical demeanor throughout the novel, he nevertheless departs from Knoxville (and presumably Tennessee if we are reading this autobiographically), its damaged environs, and his community of the dammed/damned. While a number of readings can be applied to this conclusion, one worth considering is Suttree’s inability to live with the environmental loss that surrounds him; therefore, he must decamp from the environment that he daily witnesses and that bears witness to his own psychological condition. That is, Suttree can no longer bear the sight of the polluted environments of Knoxville and must leave, and the novel ends with no cure in sight for his ecomelancholy.

Outside of a strictly ecocritical context, the novel’s ending is problematic. On the one hand, Suttree’s departure demonstrates the upper-class privilege and mobility that he enjoyed all along, underscoring the possibility that “Suttree’s self-imposed exile appears to be little more

than slumming” (McCoy 142). And on the other hand, rather than provide a critique of modern industrial capitalist society—which Holloway identifies as “the ideology of the commodity landscape”—the novel concludes with another “capitalist ideology . . . the fully centered, self-propelling subject of bourgeois myth” (Holloway 140 n.19).¹⁰ Suttree is aided and abetted by the highway. From an environmental justice standpoint—namely, that ecological devastation and injustice disproportionately affect the groups least capable of doing anything about it—Suttree’s singular, self-determined, and escapist act of vacating the community of McAnally Flats at its moment of dispossession strips him of much of his ethical or moral agency as it relates to the groups of people he had developed relationships with. Suttree’s “white flight” from environmental destruction nods toward a long history of solitary white males seeking refuge from corrupt city centers by heading West (literally or psychologically). The narration, however, provides a final image that hints at the futility of such quests. As Suttree hitches a ride out of Knoxville, he looks out the car window and sees the unfinished works of the inchoate highway system: “Off to the right side the white concrete of the expressway gleamed in the sun where the ramp curved out into empty air and hung truncate with iron rods bristling among the vectors of nowhere” (McCarthy 471). There is no *there* to escape to, and ultimately recovery must be sought on the grounds on which trauma was experienced. Rather than find a new love object, Suttree must consciously return to what remains of Knoxville’s damaged environments to start anew.

While I do not intend to suggest that we let Suttree off of the hook for his actions at the novel’s end, I wonder if we cannot worry the above reading by taking into consideration the possibility of the novel, in part, being a *Künstlerroman*,¹¹ and the narrative itself being the product of Suttree’s mature artistry. Suttree-turned-artist uses the vector of the novel to grapple

with and finally personally integrate the many traumas of his past, one of which being his living in and with devastated environments. This suggests that one possible way out of ecomelancholy is through the telling of narratives. Language, rather than being a prison house, might then become a means of working through for the ecomelancholic individual. Additionally, it is the authorial act of telling or narrating that allows audience members to see environments of abjection and then respond with ameliorative action. While this notion of the ameliorative powers of narrative and storytelling will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter on Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, it is worth noting here that what Silko scholar Aaron Derosa writes is applicable to my reading of *Suttree*:

Stories are historically privileged in psychological trauma studies. From Freud's 'talking cure' to Kitty Klein's cognitive models that confirm the value of "narrative accounts of traumatic events" as aids to "the healing process" (Klein 2003, 56), trauma seemingly requires what LaCapra calls an 'articulatory practice'. . . . Narratives don't just aid in normalization of individual trauma but help foster support communities and distribute the traumatic effects over a group. (Derosa 53)

Suttree has not fully recovered from ecomelancholy by the narrative's end, and he will not fully recover until he authors the book, of which he is the eponymous character. Seen through this lens, the novel becomes *Suttree*'s talking-cure, or, rather, his writing-cure, through which he sheds light on the shadow kingdom of McAnally Flats and the unseen peoples and environments that modern industrial development tries so desperately to leave unseen and unheard. Rather than remaining in a state that unendingly and debilitatingly grieves over the loss of environment, this narrative retelling allows *Suttree* to productively incorporate such histories into his own personal

history and identity. Though we may be criticize Suttree's sudden departure from Knoxville as being selfishly motivated, his act of writing the novel bears witness to the abjected peoples and environments of Knoxville with the potential of affecting widespread social change.

While I would like for this reading to tie a tidy bow on the otherwise problematic conclusion of the novel, one glaring issue remains: there is no textual evidence for Suttree making the transition from ecomelancholic to productively reflective artist. The novel does not connect the dots by demonstrating what Suttree's actual working through looks like. Furthermore, if Suttree had indeed written this autobiographical account in order to work through his ecomelancholia, one would expect the novel to conclude where a working through had actually taken place. If we return to Marshall Berman's closing reflections over the lost neighborhoods that the modern New York highway cuts through, perhaps we can find a method for working through that remained elusive to Suttree. Berman notes that "One of the central themes in the culture of the 1970s was the rehabilitation of . . . history as a vital part of personal identity" (333). While *Suttree* is composed over the span of nearly two decades, its publication in 1979 clearly makes it a social and cultural product of the 1970s. And as many scholars have noted, the autobiographical coincidences with the novel are too pervasive to be overlooked. In writing the novel, McCarthy is rehabilitating the Knoxville of his past and perhaps insisting that he is *not* Suttree. The caveat that Berman insists on, however, is that "modernists do not try to blend or merge themselves with their past . . . [but] bring to bear on their past the selves they have become in the present" (333). Similar to the "talking cure" discussed above, Berman sees "the primacy of dialogue" to be an essential component to "the ongoing life of modernism"; hence, "modernists can never be done with the past: they must go on forever haunted by it, digging up its ghosts, recreating it even as they remake their world and themselves" (346). To be

forever haunted by a traumatized past to the point where one consciously seeks it out, examines, and (re)creates it anew necessitates a working through that willfully refuses to forget, a process of working through that the novel denies us.

Despite the inconclusive ending, the text can nevertheless still productively communicate the importance of *reading* the effects of ecomelancholia. In her recent work *Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction: Environment and Affect*, Heather Houser is interested in claims about narrative's ability "to bring readers to environmental consciousness," particularly "through narrative affect" (2). As I have tried to argue thus far, ecomelancholy is an affective response to the damaged and polluted environments of modern industry, and the novel situates both its protagonist and reading audience side-by-side with the abjected things and people of Knoxville, setting the stage for both Suttree and reader to be affected by narrative affect. The primary difference is that as an ecomelancholic, Suttree is largely unconscious of his affective responses, whereas we as readers can consciously observe and respond differently to the degraded and abjected environments of the novel (we for one, can respond with shock, horror, and laughter). Such experiences of affect place individuals in "positions to adjust modes of thought, to act (or remain passive), and to make decisions" (3). Houser does, however, caution against excessive idealizations of relationality, stating that "interconnectedness and relatedness may not be tantamount to health and harmony," citing "conflict, risk, discord, and reflexivity" as possible outcomes (15). Additionally, she cautions that "the same emotions that bring us to awareness might orient response in uninvited ways" (16). But ultimately, one of Houser's conclusions about literatures concerned with ecosickness is that "*narrating dysfunction* is central to the very definition, experience, and management of it" (26; emphasis added).¹² While I think that she is correct to caution against viewing the recognition of relationality as the penultimate antidote to

exploitive environmental practices, primarily because such recognitions could result in nothing more than abject horror or unending cycles of ecomelancholy among other responses, narratives that encourage environmentally relational awareness, such as *Suttree*'s narrative of ecomelancholy, remain one of our best hopes to incite "environmental consciousness" and prick environmental consciences.

CHAPTER II

FORGETTING THE PAST TO REMEMBER THE FUTURE: WORKING THROUGH ECOMELANCHOLY IN LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S CEREMONY

Leslie Marmon Silko's 1977 novel *Ceremony* shifts this project's discussion of psychological responses to damaged environments in a number of ways. Silko is a woman of color—she identifies as Laguna Pueblo as well as Anglo and Mexican American—writing from the perspective of a marginalized people, and her authorial voice's creative potential provides a necessary counterpoint to the two European American male voices discussed so far. First, and most noticeably, her formal strategy resists the Western tradition of linear storytelling by incorporating prose, poetry, and ceremonial incantation into one narrative, testing the limits of the novel's generic form. Second, her novel clearly has an affirmative ending that entails personal recovery and communal reincorporation whereas Dickey's and McCarthy's inconclusive endings evoke anxiety and consternation. Silko's narrative places a primacy on movement, flow, adaptation, and incorporation whereas the other novels demonstrate the effects of stasis, psychological blockage, and communal exclusion. Third, Silko writes from a subaltern position on behalf of a subaltern people. While Dickey and McCarthy both undeniably evoke readerly sympathies for the Appalachian communities affected by environmental injustices, each of their protagonists nevertheless has affluent white society as his progenitor and social safety net. The tension that arises from Ed Gentry and his gang's touristic intrusion into Georgia wilderness and Suttree's slumming in Knoxville is mitigated by their recourse to white distancing and disavowal. *Deliverance*'s characters are able to repress the experiences they have

had on the river thanks to the manmade lake that literally covers up their tracks. Similarly, our last view of a socially and environmentally stratified Knoxville is from the backward glance of a westward-departing Suttree. That is, Suttree has the choice to leave his damaged environment.

Ceremony's Tayo has no such privileged recourse as Ed Gentry or Cornelius Suttree.¹ He is a "half-breed" (half-white, half-Laguna Pueblo) recently returned from the Pacific front lines of World War II (*Ceremony* 39). The reality that awaits his homecoming is a drought-stricken New Mexican landscape and a second-class citizenship² that further traumatize the already burdened personal identity that he carried before the war. *Ceremony* is a story about the post-traumatic search for and use of language as well as the ameliorative power of storytelling. *Ceremony*'s affirmative ending ultimately depicts Tayo recovering from the traumas associated with his experience during the war and his initial dissociation from the land and his community. Critics such as Aaron Derosa and Michelle Satterlee (who also publishes under the name Michelle Balaev) provide readings of the novel focusing on the prevalent themes of trauma and Tayo's relation to the community and land he calls home. Satterlee observes that

The novel suggests that recovering an integrated sense of identity is possible after a traumatic event, thus refuting the popular notion today that trauma shatters identity. . . . The external landscape helps bridge the gap of dissociation by allowing Tayo to incorporate traumatic memories through a relation to place, thus creating a meaningful internal "landscape" that promotes recovery. (89)

Derosa, interested in trauma's broader cultural ramifications, approaches the novel by first asserting that "the social environment in which Silko composed *Ceremony* was heavily scarred by the traumatogenic event of the atomic bomb," and this scarring affected her creative process (48). Elaborating on the novel, Derosa notes that Silko is careful not to attribute Tayo's trauma to

any one single event, but rather “imagines the trauma in terms of inheritable information as stories and ceremonies. Although Silko doesn’t totalize the community’s pain under a single catalyst (there are others such as the drought or the community’s disaffected youth), the novel is particularly concerned with the threat of the bomb and those who wield it: ‘destroyers’” (56). Derosa views the novel “as an adaptive ‘working through’ of the cultural trauma” that positions “the individual and the community within a larger global network” (61-62). Additionally, Michelle Balaev, in *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels*, notes that the psychological abuse that Tayo receives from his aunt and others, both Indian and non-Indian, due to his mixed ancestry is what connects Tayo’s “individual trauma . . . to a cultural experience of violence and loss” (58). Tayo’s identity is further complicated by the losses of his communally esteemed, full-blooded Indian cousin, Rocky, a fellow soldier in the war, and of his rancher uncle, Josiah. The novel relates Tayo’s multiple attempts to reunite with the community and land that he had left—physically and psychically—and the necessary ceremonies that lead to this reunion. And yet, a central problem remains: despite Tayo’s recovery, the external landscape itself still bears the marks of *ongoing* misuse and exploitation, a reality that suggests the appropriateness of ecomelancholy. And what about all of the other daily realities Tayo must face as a Native American in the post-World War II United States, environmental injustice being a primary one? I would like to pick up where both the novel and interpretations of the novel leave off and hypothesize what Tayo’s and Native American cultures’ adaptation could look like in light of the environmental futures that we know await them in the 50s, 60s, and 70s. Some central questions of concern are: What happens when people living in and on landscapes are healing but the land itself is not? What sustains psychological health beyond human community when ongoing environmental devastation, dispossession, and injustice occurs unabated? How does one continue

to work through and incorporate personally, culturally, and environmentally devastating events? Can the stymied repetitions of ecomelancholy be turned into the productive ritual repetition that ceremonies entail? What kinds of ceremonies and speech acts will the next generations have to develop in order to adapt?

Before any narrative actually occurs within *Ceremony*, the novel situates stories and the act of telling them as mythic poetry/oratory, establishing storytelling as one of the most fundamental and primary means for humans to fight off sickness and evil: “They [stories] are all we have, you see, / all we have to fight off / illness and death,” and the destroyers are those who “try to destroy the stories / let the stories be confused or forgotten” (2), and at the heart of this forgetting is an act that invalidates Native oral culture. The novel roots part of Tayo’s psychological trauma in the misuse of language while in the Philippines during the war and the concomitant effects this has on his native landscape in New Mexico. As a prisoner-of-war, he and his fellow prisoners, including his sick, stretcher-bound cousin Rocky, are forced on a long, strenuous march reminiscent of the Bataan Death March. Torrential rains make the going difficult, especially for Tayo and the other soldier charged with carrying Rocky. When Tayo and the fellow soldier stagger one too many times, a Japanese soldier crushes Rocky’s skull with the butt of his rifle, “freeing” them from the burden of carrying him. Tayo blames his stumbling and Rocky’s death on the unrelenting weather, and begins damning the rain: “he started repeating ‘Goddamn, goddamn!’; it flooded out of the last warm core in his chest and echoed inside his head. He damned the rain until the words were a chant. . . . The words gathered inside him and gave him strength. . . . and all the time he could hear his own voice praying against the rain” (11). In repeatedly cursing the rain, Tayo performs an anti-ceremony, a repetitive act symptomatic of ecomelancholy. The compulsively chanted words “Goddamn, Goddamn!” take

on ritual and ceremonial form, traumatizing the land and the speaker both. Tayo enters into an ongoing destructive cycle where his cursing damages the land, which in turn further traumatizes him and exacerbates his ecomelancholy.

Immediately following this scene, the narrative is displaced back to the present day as Tayo observes an arid New Mexican landscape: “So he had prayed the rain away, and for the sixth year it was dry; the grass turned yellow and it did not grow. Wherever he looked, Tayo could see the consequences of his praying” (13). This jump in time illustrates the lasting effects of Tayo’s lingual, anti-ceremonial act on the natural environment. That Tayo understands his words to be responsible for the drought his homeland is experiencing in part explains his novel-long difficulty of talking-through his trauma. As Balaev notes, “The absence of a ‘talking cure’ . . . by the traumatized protagonist suggests that retelling the traumatic past to another is less important than reconnecting to the land with its human, natural, and mythic histories that help the person reestablish a relationship to the social community of his home” (60). Tayo’s silence is especially understandable since he considers his lingual cursing of the land to be the source of his disconnection from it. This idea underscores the novel’s interest in language’s ability to affect the other-than-human. This is reiterated when he converses with the traditional medicine man Ku’oosh and is unable to communicate his ideas: “He didn’t know how to explain what had happened. He did not know how to tell him that he had not killed any enemy or that he did not think that he had. But that he had done things far worse, and the effects were everywhere in the cloudless sky, on the dry brown hills, shrinking skin and hide taut over sharp bone” (33). Because Tayo’s anticeremony is a traumatic symptom of his ecomelancholy, new and better ceremonies must be performed so as to transform his repeated performance from deleterious ritual to one that is ameliorative and recuperative. Throughout all of this, it must be noted that it

is not language itself that distances Tayo from the rest of the world, but his particular use of language. Tayo's language for better and worse directly connects him with his immediate environs, that which is outside of himself. Rather than the psychological being dualistically separated from the somatic, the embodied realities that Tayo experiences throughout the novel demonstrate the complementary and interrelated nature of psychological and somatic experiences. When drinking at the bar with other Native veterans—Harley, his friend, and Emo, an angry man who resents Tayo for his “half breed” status—Tayo responds to the condition of the squalid bathroom as if he were back in the Philippines:

He pushed down on the handle of the toilet, but it didn't flush; the lid of the toilet tank was leaning against the wall and the floor was covered with dirty water. It was soaking through his boots. The sensation was sudden and terrifying; he could not get out of the room, and he was afraid he would fall into the stinking dirty water and have to crawl through it, like before, with jungle clouds raining down filthy water that smelled ripe with death. He lunged at the door; he landed on his hands and knees in the dark outside the toilet. The dreams did not wait any more for night; they came out anytime. (52)

The somatic sensation of the water seeping through his boots psychically transports him back to a south Pacific jungle where he imagines the tactile experience of filthy water and the stench of death. The backed up toilet symbolizes the static state in which Tayo is in, a place where flow, movement, and purgation is not possible. The words “like before” signal that this is a traumatized act of repetition initiated by a psychic and somatic response to a particular environment. We see a similar response from Tayo when he visits the untraditional medicine healer, Betonie, in Gallup, a city with ceremonial grounds approximately one hundred miles west

of the Laguna Pueblo. The narration describes the Gallup Ceremonial as an anticipated yearly event that brings in revenue for Gallup merchants and where tourists got to “see Indians and Indian dances. . . . from the Grandstand at the Ceremonial grounds they watched dancers perform, and they watched Indian cowboys ride bucking horses and Brahma bulls” (107). What this spectacle overlooks and what the tourists do not see is the abject poverty in which Native residents of Gallup live; Betonie’s cave-dwelling, however, overlooks this very site. When Tayo visits, they discuss the environment in which he has chosen to live:

“People ask me why I live here,” he said, in good English, “I tell them I want to keep track of the people. ‘Why over here?’ they ask me. ‘Because this is where Gallup keeps Indians until Ceremonial time. Then they want to show us off to the tourists.’” He looked down at the riverbed winding through the north side of Gallup. “There,” he said, pointing his chin at the bridge, “they sleep over there, in alleys between the bars.” He turned and pointed to the city dump east dump east of the Ceremonial grounds and rodeo chutes. “They keep us on the north side of the railroad tracks, next to the river and their dump. Where none of them want to live.” He laughed. (108)

As Tayo listens to Betonie speak, he is unable to share in the dark humor as he looks at the “glare of the sun on tin cans and broken glass, blinding reflections off the mirrors and chrome of the wrecked cars in the dump below” (108). As Betonie narrates this scene of environmental injustice, and Tayo observes Gallup’s abjected environment of which he is a part being a member of the same abjected people group who inhabit it, he “[feels] the old nausea rising up in his stomach, along with a vague feeling that he knew something which he could not remember” and ultimately wonders “how the medicine man could look down at it every day” (108). Again

we see a recurring somatic response—“the old nausea”—in conjunction with ecomelancholic response to the landscape—a recurring feeling “which he could not remember.” Additionally, this scene forecasts Tayo’s eventual working through by depicting Betonie making his home above the ceremonial grounds; that is, we are presented the image of a Native intentionally deciding to remain on and inhabit a landscape that will remind him of its despoliation daily.

While Tayo’s cursing of the rain in the Philippines is not literally what causes drought in New Mexico, the novel does suggest that language and imagination come directly from our physical experience and interaction with the world around us. *Ceremony* seems to be interested in what Silko identifies in her essay “Landscape, History and Pueblo Imagination” as “a unique relationship between the ritual-mythic world and the actual, everyday world” (272). In order to bring these two worlds into contact, Silko stresses the use of imaginative narratives that form connections between natural environments and the people who inhabit them:

The narratives linked with prominent features of the landscape between Paugate and Laguna delineate the complexities of the relationship which human beings must maintain with the surrounding natural world if they hope to survive in this place. Thus the journey [is] an interior process of the imagination, a growing awareness that being human is somehow different from all other life—animal, plant, and inanimate. Yet we are all from the same source; the awareness never deteriorated into Cartesian duality, cutting off the human from the natural world. (273)

While language might mark our difference from “all other life,” it is also through the potential imaginings that language makes possible and creates through narrative that we are able to (re)integrate ourselves into the human and nonhuman communities around us. For Tayo, this

would involve performing a new, better ceremony that would transform his previously enacted anticeremony. The imaginative capability that Tayo displays in associating his speech act with literal environmental changes demonstrates the kind of awareness of complex human-environment relationships that individuals must at least conceptualize if, as Silko says, “they hope to survive in this place.” Perhaps it is also productive to think of language as *one* manifestation of being among countless other possible manifestations rather than *the* manifestation that establishes a hierarchy of being. As another Laguna Pueblo author, Paula Gunn Allen attests, the “Indian sees human intelligence as rising out of the very nature of being, which is of necessity intelligent in and of itself, as an attribute of being. . . . It follows that those attributes possessed by human beings are natural attributes of *all* being” (247). If we conjoin both Silko’s and Allen’s positions, it becomes clear that unique to the human species is the ability to imaginatively craft lingual narratives that, while pointing to our individuality, provide the means of affirming and engaging in the multifaceted whole that is being. One such example is when Josiah catches a young Tayo killing flies, and rather than rebuke him harshly as the white school teacher did attesting that “they are bad and carry sickness,” Josiah tells him a story about how the greenbottle fly saves the desert people from drought and starvation. As he comforts a downcast Tayo, Josiah says, “I think it will be okay. . . . Next time just remember the story” (*Ceremony* 93-94).

While language has the potential to conjoin the fractured human and nonhuman relationships within a land community, it is clear that Tayo has to work towards realizing it, hence his pervasive difficulty with talking and his long silences. His language is clearly obstructed by the traumas he has experienced, and a constant reminder and source of this trauma is the land itself, land that he believes he has cursed; language is both the cause and potential

cure of Tayo's trauma. His inability to communicate is first evidenced in his interactions with white doctors prior to returning to the reservation. Tayo has a disembodied experience with the doctor, not recognizing his voice as his own: "one day Tayo heard a voice answering the doctor. The voice was saying, 'He can't talk to you. He is invisible. His words are formed with an invisible tongue, they have no sound.'" Tayo then "reached into his mouth and felt his own tongue; it was dry and dead, the carcass of a tiny rodent" (14-15). In this scene, silence is ultimately better than a destructive sound. If language is an act that originates in embodiment, it makes sense that Tayo's experience of disembodiment is concomitant with his loss of language. As he believes, his tongue spoke the drought into existence, and it now represents the death of a life form common to the New Mexican landscape. As the novel develops, Tayo becomes increasingly aware of narrative being a component part of reality: "He turned. Everywhere he looked, he saw a world made of stories, the long ago, time immemorial stories, as old Grandma called them. It was a world alive, always changing and moving" (88). The novel evidences the difficulty of interacting with a "world made of stories" when one has no language with which to do so or when one distrusts their own use of language. It is the refamiliarization with the land that Tayo experiences when searching for his uncle's stolen cattle that reengages him with "the comfort of belonging with the land, and the peace of being with these hills" (108) and ultimately restores his language. By enacting Betonie's ceremony and discovering the open-pit uranium mine—both scenes I will address in more depth shortly—Tayo is able to tie together the strands of the story that had been happening all along and ultimately deliver his own narrative, redeeming the language that he once used to curse, to the elders in the kiva by novel's end (238).

While talking to Betonie in his cave above Gallup, Tayo comes to realize that "His sickness was only part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great

and inclusive of everything” (116). Tayo’s sickness is not merely individual; rather, it is one manifestation of a systemic illness that specifically affects the land and culture he is a part of as well as the human race in general. It is an illness that perverts and distorts language and other ceremonial acts, putting these acts in opposition to the nonhuman world rather than in support of it, as evidenced by Tayo’s ceremonial cursing as well as the development of the nuclear bomb. Additionally, the racial discrimination, broken treaties, and desacralized and devastated environments that Tayo has been subjected to as a member of the Laguna Pueblo nation bespeak the nationwide systemic historical and ongoing violence that Native Americans endure at the hands of the white man. The historical legacy of the General Allotment Act, a federal act in effect from 1887 to 1934 which sought to assimilate native communities into a hegemonically white American system by dividing native community landholdings into lots to be held in trust by the federal government and lots to be sold on the open market, as well as other attempts at assimilation through the end of World War II, particularly through primary and secondary education, splintered Native American tribal and land-based identities (Meredith 45-49). It is worth noting that the use and misuse of *words*, through legislative acts and broken treaties, were doing all of this. Language is literally traumatizing Native society and culture.

But rather than place the blame for systemic illness solely on the white race, Tayo slowly comes to the realization that whites have been tricked and manipulated by Indian “witchery.” Betonie warns Tayo that “the trickery of the witchcraft” is the false belief that “all evil resides with white people”; rather, he explains that while whites may be “the destroyers” responsible for the atomic bomb and despoliation of Native lands, the white race was actually made by “Indian witchery . . . in the first place” (*Ceremony* 122). Betonie relies on the power of a creation myth to explain the distant past’s relation to Tayo’s present moment: “Long time ago / in the

beginning / there were no white people in this world / there was nothing European” (122). As he continues his tale, he contests that had it not been for witchery, the world would have continued like this because it was “complete / even without white people” (122-23). While Betonie roots witchery within Indian culture, he is careful not to localize it within any one group:

Then it happened.

These witch people got together.

Some came from far away

across oceans

across mountains.

Some had slanty eyes

others had black skin.

.....

they all got together

witch people from all directions

witches from all the Pueblos

and all the tribes. (123)

Betonie’s tale is a complex one. The seamless transition from prosaic conversation with Tayo to poetic telling, present moment to mythic past—connotes the new kind of syncretistic ceremonies that are necessary for combating witchery in the atomic age. Within his tale, Natives are not simply passive victims, but active agents, just as Tayo himself has been both victim and agent of

trauma. In his own words, they are the creators of the white race, and whites are victims to a greater evil. This knowledge challenges Tayo's traditional understanding of European-Native American relations. While initially begrudging the white race for its greed and violent acts of dispossession, Tayo is able to recognize through both the mythic stories of his culture and enacting Betonie's ceremony that evil is ultimately ideological and not racial (Derosa 61). Two key moments in the novel illustrate this pivotal shift in Tayo's ways of thinking:

He lay there and hated them [white people]. Not for what they wanted to do with him, but for what they did to the earth with their machines, and to the animals with their packs of dogs and their guns. . . . the bright city lights and loud music, the soft sweet food and the cars—all these living things had been stolen, torn out of Indian land: raw living materials for their ck'o'yo manipulation. . . . The destroyers had tricked the white people as completely as they had fooled the Indians, and now only a few people understood how the filthy deception worked; only a few people knew that the lie was destroying the white people faster than it was destroying the Indian people. (189-90)

The witchery would be at work all night so that the people would see only the losses—the land and the lives lost—since the whites came; the witchery would work so that the people would be fooled into blaming only the whites and not the witchery. . . . the old priests would be afraid too, and cling to ritual without making new ceremonies as they always had before, the way they still made new Buffalo Dance songs each year. (231)

Rather than cling to former rituals of ceremony-making, ceremonies that would be exclusionary in their ideological stance, Tayo, upon discovering the open-pit uranium mine on reservation

land, ultimately recognizes that “human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them, for all living things” and that the world has “no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time” (Silko 228, 229). The transnational networks that had been formed through two world wars and the global implications implicit with the ascendancy of the atomic age demand new methods of racial, national, geographical, and environmental orientation.

Part of Tayo’s illness stems from a severance from a holistic relation to the land and its community. He, in part, is responsible for this disconnect due to his cursing of the land, a curse that in traumatizing the land traumatizes him further. But the land also bears testimony to a different trauma. It points toward a history of losses that extends into the present moment and shows no sign of abating: “Every day they had to look at the land, from horizon to horizon, and every day the loss was with them; it was the dead unburied, and the mourning of the lost going on forever. So they tried to sink the loss in booze, and silence their grief with war stories about their courage, defending the land they had already lost” (157). One of the new methods that Tayo must incorporate into his ceremony is adaptive, productive forgetting. Working-through the mourning process ultimately entails a certain amount of productive forgetting so as to “[integrate] traumatic memory into one’s ongoing life story” (Satterlee 88). Tayo demonstrates such forgetting while searching for his Uncle Josiah’s lost cattle: “He stopped on the edge of the clearing. The air was much colder. He had been so intent on finding the cattle that he had forgotten all the events of the past days and past years. Hunting the cattle was good for that. Old Betonie was right. It was a cure for that, and maybe for other things too” (*Ceremony* 178). By searching for and returning the wayward cattle to their homeland, Tayo focuses on his own agency instead of his victimization, and performs part of the ceremony that Betonie envisions.

The literal act of searching for them demands that Tayo's energies and attention be located solely in the present, distracting and distancing him from his traumatized past without insisting on complete forgetfulness. Tayo is comparable to his uncle's Mexican cattle, livestock specifically *crossbred* for surviving the arid conditions of the Laguna Pueblo reservation. And it is Tayo's attempt to reclaim these cattle from the American ranchers who stole them that figures prominently in his ceremonial recovery. "Cattle are like any living thing," Josiah relates to Tayo. "If you separate them from the land for too long, keep them in barns and corrals, they lose something. . . . When you turn them loose again, they go running all over. They are scared because the land is unfamiliar and they are lost" (*Ceremony* 68). By recognizing the relationality of the cattle with all other living things, Josiah's comment forms a direct analogy with Tayo's own experiences of fear and detachment after the war. Through the literal act of returning the cattle to the Laguna reservation, Tayo participates in the ceremonial act of reuniting himself with the land and making an unfamiliar place familiar. *Ceremony* offers a type of psychological closure that is absent from the previous two novels in this study, and the closure stems from Tayo's act of working-through by the process of ceremonial (re)invention, and as I will discuss shortly, his refusal to participate in histories of ceremonial violence.

Tayo's recognition that his illness stems in part from a disassociation from the land and its community subverts traditional Western schemas of understanding wilderness experiences. The lone individual reflecting and reporting on his personal feelings and experiences in "untainted" wilderness is the type traditionally championed by Western environmental literatures. But Tayo's "wilderness" is not a wilderness at all, but a landscape that is tainted and populated with abjected people. While *Deliverance* and *Suttree* provide critiques of this myth as much as *Ceremony*, they do so by placing their protagonists in places where communion with the

physical world prompts either horror or psychological distancing to the extent that both protagonists recede further into themselves. They turn inward rather than outward, denying “something great and inclusive of everything”; their individuality engenders a crippling stasis rather than the relational fluidity that Tayo experiences. Allen critiques the Western literary tradition’s tendency to privilege “pure self-expression,” saying that “tribes do not celebrate the individual’s ability to feel emotion, for they assume that all people are able to do so” (242). This underscores Tayo’s sickness as integral to a larger, systemic whole that necessarily involves the communal and critiques the melancholic nature poet-writer who merely emotes (that Tayo approximates prior to working through his trauma) as if that were unique to their writerly genius. Ed Gentry, experiencing an overabundance of emotion, and Cornelius Suttree, experiencing a deficiency of emotion, additionally provide critiques of this environmental stereotype by offering counternarratives to white male wilderness experience; but rather than working through their difficulties and integrating back into their respective communities as does Tayo, both men remain insularly gridlocked within their own psyches, literally stuck in their traumas. Tayo’s working-through differs from the psychological repression present in *Deliverance* and the ecomelancholic stasis of *Suttree* in that it recognizes the individual’s continually evolving and constitutive presence within the communal matrix that makes up any place. He is no longer the psychologically damaged, ecomelancholic individual that we encounter at the beginning of the novel. Rather, through his ceremonial performance, he works through his past traumas and is reintegrated into the community made up of both humans and the natural environment.

Allen elaborates on the importance of ceremony as a means to prevent psychological stasis and as a way to “integrate” oneself within a larger network of relations. “Stasis is not characteristic of the American Indians’ view of things. As any American Indian knows, all of life

is living—that is, dynamic and aware,” (243) Allen writes. Ceremonies represent this viewpoint, for their very “purpose is to integrate: to fuse the individual with his or her fellows. . . . The person sheds the isolated, individual personality and is restored to conscious harmony with the universe” (249). But in order for a ceremony to continually be able to integrate those involved, it must be able to adapt. Betonie attests that “it [has become] necessary to create new ceremonies” because “things which don’t shift and grow are dead things” and “the witchery is counting on” people “cling[ing] to the ceremonies the way they were” (166-17). Ceremonies must move and evolve rather than simply repeat.

The penultimate moment of the novel is when Tayo comes upon an open uranium pit and is able to connect the historical and environmental realities of the land region he calls home with his own psychosomatic condition:

He had been so close to it, caught up in it for so long that its simplicity struck him deep inside his chest: Trinity Site, where they exploded the first atomic bomb, was only three hundred miles to the southeast, at White Sands. And the top-secret laboratories where the bomb had been created were deep in the Jemenez Mountains, on land the Government took from Cochiti Pueblo: Los Alamos, only a hundred miles northeast of him now, still surrounded by high electric fences. . . . There was no end to it; it knew no boundaries; and he had arrive at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the earth, had been laid He walked to the mine shaft slowly, and the feeling became overwhelming: the pattern of the ceremony was complete there. He knelt and found an ore rock. The gray stone was streaked with powdery yellow uranium, bright and alive as pollen. (228)

And while this realization helps Tayo possibly resolve his own localized physical illness, it also informs him of a boundary-less “point of convergence” that unites all of humankind into “one clan again” (228). Tayo’s triangulation between Trinity Site, Los Alamos, and his own reservation is a picture-in-miniature of the global interconnectedness he soon discovers to be a reality.³ Here, New Mexico becomes a global microcosm. This climactic scene takes Tayo and the reader from the tangled, cacophonous threads of Spanish, Japanese, and Laguna voices that open the novel (5), to the narration’s assertion that “there would be no peace and the people would have no rest until the entanglement had been unwound to the source” (64), to Tayo’s final “relief . . . at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together” (229). By understanding the history of the land—one that is now local, tribal, national, and global—Tayo is able to unite all the voices and stories into one ultimate narrative that has “no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time” (229). The destroyer’s witchery is not static, but is in perpetual motion, transitioning from one generation to the next, hence Betonie’s assertions that ceremonies must be adaptable if they are to combat the witchery. Tayo’s recognition of relationality bespeaks the reality of the atomic age and the impossibility of merely thinking about the local or even regional. As Hsinya Huang argues, once Tayo recognizes the pattern between the various geographical sites on Indian reservations and their complicity in the building and testing of the atomic bomb, he “envisions his connection with other lands and people across the Pacific Ocean. The mining destroys lives across time and distance, connecting people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki with tribal indigenes in the Americas” (5). Tayo’s discovery epitomizes what Ursula Heise considers the “challenge for environmentalist thinking,” and, I might add, ecological thinking: “to shift the core of its cultural imagination from a sense of place to a less territorial and more systemic sense of planet” (56).

Derosa understands Tayo's ultimate recognition to be Silko's act of "directly link[ing] the traumatic impact of the bomb to the inappropriate traditionalism of racial-group identity formations" (59), and this transition from a racial to ideological view of the witchery is what allows him "to adapt the cultural ceremony for Laguna survival in the atomic era," be "one less beholden to tradition and the ritual of violence dictated by destroyer culture" (61), and ultimately render tradition less ecomelancholic and traumatized. Tayo's interstitial "half-breed" racial status places him in a position to voice a unique and necessarily border-violating perspective in an age that now lacks proper boundaries. It is an identity that encompasses rather than excludes. Tayo recognizes his own potentiality for utilizing his multiracial identity as mediator early in the novel while drinking with story-swapping Native veterans: "I'm half-breed. I'll be the first to say it. I'll speak for both sides" (39). Unable to affiliate with any one racial identity, Tayo is outside of the bounds of traditionalism. His hybridity is what allows him to "speak for both sides," denoting the possibility of a new language that reconciles and integrates.

The final act of Tayo's ceremony is to confront and resist the witchery's call to destroy and perpetuate a history of violence. Significantly, the final acts of violence in the novel are committed by Natives against Natives. After returning his Uncle Josiah's cattle back to Native land, Tayo is warned by Ts'eh, his lover who mythically embodies the natural world, that his enemy, Emo, will send U.S. government officials after him:

The end of the story. They want to change it. They want it to end here, the way all their stories end, encircling slowly to choke the life away. The violence of the struggle excites them, and the killing soothes them. They have their stories about us—Indian people who are only marking time and waiting for the end. And they would end this story right here, with you fighting to your death alone in these

hills. Doctors from the hospital and the BIA police come. Some of the old men from Laguna come too. They drive over there in their patrol cars. . . . The doctors have medicine to quiet you. The others bring guns. Emo has told them you are crazy, that you live in the cave here and you think you are a Jap soldier. They are all afraid of you. (*Ceremony* 215)

The witchery is attempting to halt and silence Tayo's new ceremonial performance through acts of violence; the temptation for Tayo is whether or not to reciprocate the violence. When it becomes clear that Tayo is hunted not by government officials but only by other Native Americans—Emo, Leroy, Harley, and Pinkie—some of whom he believed to be his friends, the novel situates Tayo's decision to be of the utmost importance to Native culture: will he give in to the witchery's hope that violence will be perpetuated, Natives being only passive victims to such violence, or will he actively resist it? When Emo begins torturing Harley in order to lure Tayo out of hiding, he, not whites, embodies the witchery against which Tayo has been fighting all along. Ultimately refusing to reveal himself and fight Emo to the death, Tayo resists the notion that violence is regenerative, and in so doing, makes room for a different narrative than the one traditionally associated with the American West.

It had been a close call. The witchery had almost ended the story according to its plan; Tayo had almost jammed the screwdriver into Emo's skull the way the witchery had wanted. . . . Their deadly ritual for the autumn solstice would have been completed by him. He would have been another victim, a drunk Indian war veteran settling an old feud. . . . The white people would shake their heads, more proud than sad that it took a white man to survive in their world and that these Indians couldn't seem to make it. At home the people would blame the liquor, the

Army, and the war, but the blame on the whites would never match the vehemence the people would keep in their own bellies, reserving the greatest bitterness and blame for themselves, for one of themselves they could not save. (235)

This anticlimax represents Tayo's working through and creation of a new ceremonial performance. Exhausted from the ceremony, Tayo falls asleep and dreams that his family is "taking him home"; the next day, he sees "clouds with round heavy bellies" on the horizon, of which the narration notes: "It was not necessary, but it was right, and even if the sky had been cloudless the end was the same" (236). By recognizing the witchery's ideological rather than racial roots and refusing to perpetuate cycles of violence, Tayo reverses the effects of his anticeremony and transforms the practice into one that is not based on the destruction of land or community. Tayo keeps the story from ending and ultimately rewrites it.

After Tayo's recovery, one question that nevertheless remains is what about the land itself. How does it heal and what should Tayo's orientation to the land be in light of the environmental futures that await it? The novel gestures towards concern over the environmental futures that the Laguna people must continue to deal with when Betonie tells Tayo the story of his grandfather, Descheeney, revealing the concern over continual ceremonial acts to combat continual witchery: "'Sometimes I don't know if the ceremony will be strong enough to stop them. We have to depend on people not even born yet. A hundred years from now'" (139). So while Tayo's ceremony may assist him in working past unending grief and alcoholism and the traumas immediately surrounding his experiences of the war, the radiation-poisoned reservation he and his tribe have been allotted will never go away. The land itself is a constant reminder of dispossession and environmental racism. Such realities necessitate further discussions about both

the ways in which Tayo can potentially heal the land that has healed him and the environmental futures that await groups in similar positions. Joni Adamson notes that the setting of *Ceremony*, as well as Silko's other novel, *The Almanac of the Dead*, is not

in the "pristine wilderness areas" celebrated by many mainstream American environmentalists and nature writers. They are set on reservations, in open-pit uranium mines, and in national and international borderlands. These novels question and confront our most popular assumptions about "nature" and "nature writing" by inviting us to take a hard look at the contested terrains where increasing numbers of poor and marginalized people are organizing around interrelated social and environmental problems. (xvii)

While *Ceremony*'s conclusion is clearly an affirmative one, we must nevertheless recognize the contested terrain on which the novel ends, both ideologically and literally. The witchery, having been defeated by Tayo's ceremony, is noted to be only "dead for now" (243), implying that it will adapt and evolve with the times and so must new ceremonies. Additionally, the novel's closing poem, "Sunrise, / accept this offering, / Sunrise" (244) points in two meaningful directions. First, it recalls Tayo's witnessing of a sunrise earlier in the novel where he contemplates the event's ceremonial implications—it is "an event which in a single moment gathered all things together" (169). Tayo concludes the ceremonial prayer "with 'sunrise' because he knew the Dawn people began and ended all their words with 'sunrise'" (169). By beginning the novel with "Sunrise" (4) and concluding with a ceremonial prayer also ending in "Sunrise," Silko makes the case for understanding the novel itself as a form of ceremony. Equally important though is the concluding image of two sunrises, an event that is a literal impossibility, unless, of course, one of those sunrises were manmade. When Old Grandma

recounts to Tayo her experience of the atomic bomb first being tested at the nearby Trinity Site, she reports believing that she “was seeing the sun rise again” (227). So while the novel’s conclusion points toward ceremonial healing, it also points towards the more insidious realities of inhabiting an atomic age landscape, a reality that will be perpetuated far into the future given the humanly incomprehensible half-life of uranium (4.5 billion years).

One prime example of an environmental future that the Laguna Pueblo and other southwestern tribes must confront comes from Peter Matthiessen’s *Indian Country*. Conducting research in 1979, roughly contemporaneous with the publication of *Ceremony*, Matthiessen paints a vivid picture of uranium’s ongoing, slowly violent presence in the daily lives of southwestern Native Americans:

On the way to Big Mountain, we passed through Grants [a town approximately thirty five miles west of Laguna Pueblo], “the Uranium Capital of the World,” a neon boom town under the south slope of Mount Taylor; here an antinuclear demonstration by whites and Indians would take place in the next few days. Despite the statistics at nearby Laguna Pueblo, where tailings from the Anaconda mine, used for fill in construction of Indian schools and other public buildings, have apparently caused serious birth defects in over one hundred Indian babies in the past five years; despite the massive radioactive poisoning from “unknown sources” of deep-well water at nearby Martinez Camp, and elsewhere; despite the known water depletion and pollution at nearby Crownpoint (to dry out the uranium strata for more profitable mining, the precious desert aquifers around Crownpoint are being “dewatered” at the rate of four hundred thousand gallons per minute); despite the fact that every wind from the northwest carries

radioactive dust from this mountainous pile of poison right across their town, prosperity has encouraged the citizens of Grants to accept the glib assurances of the mining companies about their prospects for long life. (301)

If one of literature's great attributes is its ability to "generat[e] mental models of the world" (Derosa 62), we must ask what mental model *Ceremony* projects forward into such moments that Matthiessen writes about? One possible ceremony that Matthiessen's account suggests is "the antinuclear demonstration by whites and Indians," an inclusive event that is explicitly political and ethnically diverse that is based on a common ideological goal rather than racial allegiances.

An aspect of ecomelancholy that I think can be especially fruitful for discussion is its aspect of ongoingness. A key distinction to make in answering these questions that I have posed is the difference between the *inability* and the *refusal* to let go of the past. On the one hand, melancholics cling to and live in the past without realizing it; they repeat instead of remembering without recognizing what it is they are actually repeating. On the other hand, the ecomelancholic subject that *is* working through her trauma can nevertheless decide to *refuse* to let go of the past in light of ongoing environmental devastation. In other words, this is a working-through that is committed to ongoingness. This commitment is evidenced by the simple fact that Tayo remains on the devastated land he calls home; he does not give in to the postwar pressures of assimilation and leave his reservation behind for a place like Gallup. His decision to stay is an act of agency not demonstrated by the other protagonists in this study. In other words, Tayo takes ownership of and responsibility for the problem confronting the Laguna Pueblo. When Betonie informs Tayo that Indians "can deal with white people . . . because we invented white people" (122), he invalidates Native American responses that blame whites for their problems, and in so doing, he shifts the common narrative from Natives as victims to Natives as active agents. When the

narration reveals the history behind the U.S. government's mining of uranium, it shows Native complicity in (or at least nonresistance to) the government's actions: "The big trucks sank past their axles in the blow sand, and they hired men from Bibo and Moquino to dig around the tandem wheels and to attach tow chains from the trucks to the big tow truck that came" (226). These locals are assisting the very men who despoil their land without proper compensation or restitution. Additionally, as noted in the Matthiessen excerpt above, the economic prosperity promised to the locals of Grants was enough to allay any concerns, fears, or protests about bodily or environmental contamination from the open-pit mines.

The purpose of a ceremony is to remind participants of their place within a larger environment and community through the (re)telling of narratives, narratives that require intimate knowledge of one's collective past as well as an awareness of the ongoing present. Silko writes specifically on the topic of uranium mining in her essay "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories," where she addresses the overall importance of narrative to incorporating culturally and ecologically damaging events within a community's collective memory:

[T]he decision in the early 1950s to begin open-pit mining of the huge uranium deposits north of Laguna, near Pagate village, has had a powerful psychological impact upon the Laguna people. Already a large body of stories has grown up around the subject of what happens to people who disturb or destroy the earth. I was a child when the mining began and the apocalyptic warning stories were being told. And I have lived long enough to begin hearing stories that verify the earlier warnings. . . .

The Jackpile Mine is an open pit that has been blasted out of the many hundreds of acres where the orchards and melon patches once grew. The Laguna people have not witnessed changes to the land without strong reactions.

Descriptions of the landscape *before* the mine are as vivid as any description of the present-day destruction by the open-pit mining. By its very ugliness and by the violence it does to the land, the Jackpile Mine insures that, from now on, it, too, will be included in the vast body of narratives that makes up the history of the Laguna people and the Pueblo landscape. And the description of what that landscape looked like *before* the uranium mining began will always carry considerable impact. (43-44)

The performance of ceremonial rituals calls on performers to remember what they repeat, and in so doing, they perform a cultural working through. This point is illustrated early in the novel when Josiah reminds Tayo that dry seasons are as much a part of life as rainy seasons and that “droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave” (*Ceremony* 42). Josiah’s point is not that human forgetfulness literally causes droughts, but that the label of “drought” is a human construct that places a good/bad paradigm on naturally occurring events. “[T]he wind and the dust, they are a part of life too” (42), Josiah says, suggesting that one must remember that nature is not “all good or all bad” (10). Without ongoing ceremonial rituals and performances, one becomes forgetful of the realities of the natural world and one’s place in it. Such forgetfulness is what leads to anthropocentrically harmful and exploitive views of the world. What *Ceremony* opens up for discussion is ways in which the elements of ecomelancholy can be first overcome—such as paralysis, not knowing, and passivity—then harnessed—primarily through the

commitment to ongoingness—and utilized for affecting environmental change through repeated acts of ongoing remembrance.

CONCLUSION

FABLES FOR TOMORROW: WORKING WITH TRAUMA

Rachel Carson opens *Silent Spring* with a brief, three-page chapter entitled “A Fable for Tomorrow.” She begins by describing an idyllic American anytown, “where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings” (1). But when a “strange blight” slowly invades the town spreading illness and death, one noticeable side effect, from which Carson draws her book title, is the silencing of the birds: “they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices” (2). Carson assures her reader that “This town does not actually exist, but it might easily have a thousand counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world” (3). This opening fable acts as a cautionary tale. Carson’s specific use of Cold War rhetoric—“A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know” (3)—plays on fears of nuclear holocaust; however, the scenario that she describes warns readers of a more impending and mundanely insidious danger that lurks from within American society: the use of pesticides.

While the novels I have discussed in this current study do not address the widespread application of pesticides and herbicides as does *Silent Spring*, they are nevertheless narratives that act as counterparts to Carson’s opening fable in that they reveal the consequences of unchecked industry and the effects these consequences have on the human and nonhuman world. They give voice to otherwise unvoiced tragedies of modern development. What primarily intrigued me at the beginning of this project about the three books in this study was their depictions of abjected environments, environments that, within the logic of Carson’s opening

fable, had been blighted, damaged, and sickened by unchecked modern industry. These texts do not present pristine wildernesses or pastoral utopias as environmental possibilities. Initially, I envisioned these texts as depicting “dark natures,” literary representations of environmental spaces that specifically reacted *against* biocentric Earth Day conceptions of the environment. One general question framed my preliminary research: In a cultural moment where people were encouraged to return to nature and celebrate it, what does it say about these novels that they would give representations of dispossessed peoples, damaged lands, and ongoing environmental destruction? That is, I initially viewed these texts as going against the grain of traditional environmentalist depictions of the nonhuman world. It now seems quite clear in hindsight that these novels are not reacting *against* an Earth Day ethos; on the contrary, they are acting in concord with it. These books, in their depictions of polluted and overlooked environments, demonstrate the need for a broader social and cultural recognition of the realities that many communities were *already* facing prior to Earth Day, and it was this very awareness that Earth Day was trying to promote. By giving representations of abjected or “dark” environments, *Deliverance*, *Suttree*, and *Ceremony* are post-*Silent Spring* environmentalist texts insofar that they show audiences where trash goes, who is destined to live in toxic or otherwise wasted environments, and what happens when environmentally damaging actions are systemically and repeatedly overlooked. In telling narratives that have occurred in the past, each of the novels discussed reveals many of the socio-environmental conditions that precipitated Earth Day. Additionally, as artist Robert Rauschenberg asserted in the early 1970s, “Art can become a resource that mediates between the ecologist and the industrialist. Ecology and industry aren’t one-way streets. Rather, they should be crossroads. Art can help to provide the needed dialectic between them” (qtd. in Berman 340-41). Despite their backward-looking narratives, the novels in this

study—as historical reflections, thought experiments, and narratives that give voices to the otherwise voiceless—can still function as fables for tomorrow: by documenting environmentally destructive practices, they open a window into the past that allows for the contemplation and revision of current and future actions.

In addition to seeing how these novels are situated within their historical and social milieus, one of this project's primary aims was to examine psychological responses to damaged environments in order to consider ways in which we can currently, in our everyday lives, respond to ongoing environmental devastation and destruction. *Deliverance* and *Suttree* clearly point to the symptoms and debilitating effects of ecomelancholia; *Ceremony*, while addressing similar issues, offers a reading of what working through looks like and additionally asks its reading audience to consider the role the recovered individual plays within a community that will continue to face environmental futures that will prompt ecomelancholic responses and possible relapses. I sought to uncover how one not only works *through* environmental destruction, but how one perseveres and continually works *with* the psychological effects of ongoing destruction. In attempting to understand the role that place plays—be it local, regional, or global—in psychological development, I wanted to envision ecomelancholy as a response to environmentally traumatic experiences that ultimately enabled the individual to participate in effective action rather than leaving them debilitated and hopelessly fixated on environmental loss.

As I think beyond the parameters of this particular project, I would like to continue investigating literary representations of psychological responses to environments. Michelle Balaev's work especially intrigues me as she takes up a similar goal. In an effort that explores "the multiplicity of responses to an extreme experience," Balaev reads "contemporary American

novels in an effort to deepen the discussion of trauma beyond that of the disease-driven paradigm in literary criticism today” (xi). Additionally, I envision future research projects branching out more broadly into affect studies similar to Sianne Ngai’s *Ugly Feelings*. The 1970s as a cultural and historical moment still have a hold on me, due in equal part to the continual rise of the environmental movement, the political, social, cultural, historical, and environmental ramifications of the Vietnam War, and the production of a large number of films that I find especially interesting. A number of relevant works left out of this project, particularly works with female protagonists, that I could foresee studying within an ecopsychological or affect studies lens include Cormac McCarthy’s *Child of God* (1973), Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973), Annie Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974), Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* (1975), Alice Walker’s *Meridian* (1976), Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* (1977), and Tim O’Brien’s *Going After Cacciato* (1978).

The title of this project, “The Delicate Art of Being,” is a rewording of Bobby Trippe’s assertion to Ed Gentry that psychology is “[t]he delicate art of the forest.” This direct experience between the individual mind and the external, nonhuman world should not be limited to “wilderness” experiences, where the “natural” is a distant other from the everyday realities of the twenty-first-century individual. Rather, our experiences of any environment necessarily affect us psychologically, and the delicate art of being is to be attuned with these effects. While I realize that some are more privileged than others to have the luxury of making art out of being (as opposed to barely subsisting day to day in abject poverty), it is only by recognizing that there is an intimate, reciprocating connection between the mind and the world that we can begin to correct past environmental grievances and restore health to abjected environments and communities.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Timothy Morton writes that “After 1945 there began *the Great Acceleration*, in which the geological transformation of Earth by humans increased by vivid orders of magnitude” (5). The International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme provides a wide array of graphs and statistical measurements that document the acceleration, CO₂ emissions being one of them. They write that “[t]he last 60 years have without a doubt seen the most profound transformation of the human relationship with the natural world in the history of humankind. The effects of the accelerating human changes are now clearly discernible at the Earth system level” (“Global Change”).

2. This echoes R. Buckminster Fuller’s words in his book *Operation Manual for Spaceship Earth* (1969). Fuller coined the metaphor “Spaceship Earth” to both highlight the planet’s limited resources—what we have/see is what we get—and emphasize humans’ roles in “keep[ing] the machine in good order or it’s going to be in trouble and fail to function” (466).

3. Morton makes a similar claim. He sees advances in technology as rooting us to our ontological and phenomenological positions on earth: “we humans find ourselves embedded in earthly reality. . . . This discovery is made precisely through our advanced technology and measuring instruments, not through worn peasant shoes and back-to-Nature festivals” (36).

4. The denotative meaning of the verb *abject* is “to cast off or away; to cast out, exclude, reject, esp. as inferior, unworthy, or repugnant” or “to discharge or eject.” Similarly, the noun form of the word refers to a class-based notion of abjection: “the downtrodden; outcasts” and “a person cast off or cast out” (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

5. The chapter title in which Nixon addresses this is especially poignant for my discussions of *Deliverance* and *Suttree*: “Unimagined Communities: Megadams, Monumental Modernity, and Developmental Refugees.” In this chapter, Nixon specifically explores the communities in India affected by the construction of megadams. These dams, Nixon argues, are monuments constructed by third world countries in an effort to show that they are capable of keeping up with the modernization of first world countries. Development refugees are those displaced by industry’s ongoing development and modernization of “underdeveloped” landscapes. Such landscapes must be filled with “uninhabitants” to justify dispossessive development.

6. I have found Dominick LaCapra’s rendition of these concepts especially helpful:

[M]ourning might be seen as a form of working through, and melancholia as a form of acting out. Freud, in comparing melancholia with mourning, saw melancholia as characteristic of an arrested process in which the depressed, self-beating, and traumatized self, locked in compulsive repetition is possessed by the past, faces a future of impasses, and remains narcissistically identified with the lost object. . . . Through memory work, especially the socially engaged memory work of working through, one is able to distinguish between past and present. (65-66)

7. A Freudian understanding of mourning commences with the loss of a love object. With the mother-infant relationship as prototype, Freud claims that the child directs its libido towards the mother, ultimately conflating this love object with its own ego. With weaning, a loss occurs; the love object is destroyed. Generally speaking, “If the objects are destroyed or if they are lost to us,” Freud writes, “our capacity for love (libido) is once more liberated; and it can then either take other objects instead or can temporarily return to the ego” (“On Transience”). Until the individual is able to find a new love object, she remains in a state of mourning, viewing the loss

of the object as the loss of ego. In “Mourning and Melancholy,” Freud says that “This struggle can be so intense that a turning away from reality ensues, the object being clung to through the medium of hallucinatory wish-psychosis. The normal outcome is that deference for reality gains the day. . . . when the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again” (284). Mourning, therefore, is the all-too-human response to loss, and is to be expected; it effectively and healthily works through the loss. Melancholia, however, fixates on the lost object in a way that is prohibitive to working through. The melancholiac sees the typically unconscious loss of a loved object as a debilitating, self-hating loss of self (286).

8. Betina Entzminger understands the primary reason for the trip “to be to buttress [the men’s] diminishing sense of masculinity and their appreciation for the masculinity of their peers” (100).

9. This is the second reference to anxieties over nuclear holocaust, firmly situating the novel within a Cold War era milieu. When Lewis relates his plans about hunting wild game while canoeing, Bobby responds with “Atomic-survival stuff, eh?” (9).

CHAPTER 1

1. In Plato’s dialogue *Cratylus*, Socrates offers a rendition of Heraclitus’s well-known maxim: “Heraclitus says, you know, that all things move and nothing remains still, and he likens the universe to the current of a river, saying that you cannot step twice into the same stream” (402a). The river’s function as a metaphor serves to illustrate the universal truth that ontological and epistemological repetition is impossible. Rivers, and those who enter them, are in ceaseless states of becoming; they are never the same, and all is motion. While the literal veracity of this maxim is easy enough to believe, it overlooks certain possibilities of perceived experience, particularly those involving loss or trauma.

2. Karissa McCoy argues that Suttree “maintains a critical distance from materiality” (142).

3. Rob Nixon makes a similar claim when he cautions against over-utilizing the concept of nature's resiliency to exploitation over time. "The recent turn within environmental studies toward celebrating the creative resilience of ecosystems can be readily hijacked by politicians, lobbyists, and corporations who oppose regulatory controls and strive to minimize pollution liability. Coopting the "nature-and-time-will-heal" argument has become integral to attempts to privatize profits while externalizing risk and cleanup, both of which can be delegated to 'nature's business'" (21).

4. One current environmental group that utilizes this phrase is CleanWaterAction.org.

5. While I do not dwell on it, there is a significant amount of good that came about from the TVA's influence. For example, while critical of the pollution and misuse of the French Broad and other water sources in general, Dykeman nevertheless acknowledges the unprecedented affirmative change brought about by the TVA on eastern Tennessee:

It is possible that TVA electric power has improved the face of more French Broad land than facile critics might realize. . . .

As for the TVA program as a whole, it has brought the French Broad dwellers of East Tennessee power of several kinds. Not only electric power to pump water up a steep hill leading from springhouse to kitchen, or to rotate the dasher in that washing machine decorating the front porch, or to run an engine irrigating drought-plagued pasture and crop land, but power to purchase those implements too, and the knowledge—which is power—of the best ways to use much of their land and many of their resources. (23)

Similarly, with less reservation about the negative consequences of development, Creekmore praises the TVA, admitting that "Knoxville is the better for the changes that have come, for

without change there is always stagnation” (243-44). As should be evident by now, *Suttree* offers a strong counterpoint to this last assumption.

6. On this point Prather writes, “the city must have absorbed the ‘sap’ of many of those displaced by the land acquisition and condemnation apparatus of TVA. . . . How many others . . . are rifted, dispersed fragments, like the stones themselves, of a world destroyed?” (34).

7. Davis attests that “Water pollution had already become a major problem in the southern mountains by the first decade of the twentieth century, especially downstream from major riverport towns like Charleston, West Virginia and Chattanooga, Tennessee” (190). But dams place an especial amount of strain on water quality for several reasons. The conservation group American Rivers states that dams slow riverflow “allow[ing] silt to collect on river bottoms and bury fish spawning habitat. Silt trapped above dams accumulates heavy metals and other pollutants. Gravel, logs and other debris are also trapped by dams, eliminating their use downstream as food and habitat” (“Why We Remove Dams”). Additionally, the Hydropower Reform Coalition argues that the

most common water quality violations from hydropower dams are [related to] temperature and dissolved oxygen. Dissolved oxygen helps fish breathe. But when organic materials that have built behind the dam start to decompose, they consume the limited oxygen. The lowest levels in the reservoirs become dead zones, lacking enough oxygen to support river life. This decomposition can also foster algal growth and blooms, a toxic development for river life. In the summer, temperatures can be unnaturally cold on the bottom of a reservoir and too warm on the surface. In winter, deep waters can be unnaturally warm. Then the dams release oxygen-deprived water with unnatural temperatures into the river below.

Also, if the dam releases too little water, the reduced river is easily made too warm by the sun. (“Poor Water Quality”)

8. On the French Broad alone, 79 percent of the waste found in it “is manufacturing offal from industries who daily bring millions of gallons of clear clean water into their plants, use it, and turn it back into its channel discolored, bestenched and loaded with oxygen consuming litter” (Dykeman 284).

9. Berman’s anecdote is especially relevant to the highway construction in *Suttree* given that both events described occur in the same year, 1953: “But then, in the spring and fall of 1953, [city planner Robert] Moses began to loom over my life in a new way: he proclaimed that he was about to ram an immense expressway, unprecedented in scale, expense and difficulty in construction, through our neighborhood’s heart” (292).

10. While Holloway does not say this explicitly of the novel’s ending—his comment comes within the context of the readers’ ability to acquire a “‘transcendent’ point of view that ‘goes beyond’ the commodity worlds in which [*Suttree*] and we are set”—I find it applicable to a reading of the novel’s end.

11. Farrell O’Gorman and William Prather suggest as much of the novel (O’Gorman 88).

12. She defines ecosickness as follows: “sickness . . . emphasize[s] the relational dimension of dysfunction in contemporary narrative. . . . [S]ickness is relational. . . . [I]t is pervasive dysfunction; it cannot be confined to a single system and links up the biomedical, environmental, social, and ethicopolitical; and it shows the imbrication of human and environment” (11). While my discussion of ecomelancholy is not as expansive as Houser’s study, there are clearly overlapping interests in each of our works.

CHAPTER 2

1. While I do not have the room to develop this in more detail, it is worth noting that Ed Gentry and Cornelius Suttree have one primary thing that Tayo does not, and that is what Rob Nixon terms “environmental determinism.” In his discussion of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a Nigerian writer-activist who spoke on behalf of a marginalized people group suffering from the atrocious environmental injustices committed by Shell and Chevron not unsimilar to the Native American’s exposure to uranium and radiation, Nixon notes that Saro-Wiwa considered “environmental determinism . . . as indispensable to cultural survival” (112). That the Laguna Pueblo have had their environmental determination literally stolen from them is both a reality of Native American history and a fact continually demonstrated throughout the novel: “they blamed themselves for losing the land the white people took” (39); “it was everything they had seen—the cities, the tall buildings, the noise and the lights, the power of their weapons and machines. They were never the same after that: they had seen what the white people had made from the stolen land” (156); “Every day they had to look at the land, from horizon to horizon, and every day the loss was with them” (157); “All but a small part of the mountain had been taken. The reservation boundary included only a canyon above the Encinal and a few miles of timber on the plateau. The rest of the land was taken by the National Forest and by the state which later sold it to white ranchers who came from Texas in the early 1900s” (172); “all these living things had been stolen, torn out of Indian land: raw living materials for their ck’o’yo manipulation” (189).

2. A primary example of second-class citizenship that the novel gives is of the unfair employment practices at Gallup: “Reservation people were the first ones to get laid off because white people in Gallup already knew they wouldn’t ask any questions or get angry; they just

walked away. They were educated only enough to know they wanted to leave the reservation; when they got to Gallup there weren't many jobs they could get" (*Ceremony* 106).

3. While not directly mentioned in the novel, it is worth noting the connectivity between the southwest United States of *Ceremony* and the southeast United States of the other two novels in this study, particularly *Suttree*. Knoxville is a mere twenty-five miles from Oak Ridge (cf. Chapter 1).

WORKS CITED

- Adamson, Joni. *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2001. Print.
- Adamson, Joni, and Scott Slovic. "The Shoulders We Stand On: An Introduction to Ethnicity and Ecocriticism." *MELUS* 34.2 (2009): 5-24. Print.
- Alaimo, Stacy. "Discomforting Creatures: Monstrous Natures in Recent Films." *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*. Eds. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001. 279-296. Print.
- Allen, Paula Gunn. "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective." Glotfelty and Fromm 241-263.
- Balaev, Michelle. *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2012. Print.
- Bell, Vereen. *The Achievement of Cormac McCarthy*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988. Print.
- Berman, Marshall. *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin, 1988. Print.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995. Print.
- Canfield, J. Douglas. "The Dawning of the Age of Aquarius: Abjection, Identity, and the Carnavalesque in Cormac McCarthy's *Suttree*." *Contemporary Literature* 44.4 (2003): 664-96. Print.
- Clean Water Action: We All Live Downstream: the Clean Water blog*. Clean Water Action, n.d. Web. 4 Apr. 2015.
- Creekmore, Betsey Beeler. *Knoxville*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979. Print.

- Crosby, Sara L., "Beyond Ecophilia: Edgar Allan Poe and the American Tradition of Ecohorror." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 21.3 (2014): 513-25. Print.
- "Cyperaceae." *Encyclopedia of Life*. n.p., n.d. Web. 4 Apr. 2015.
- Davis, Donald Edward. "Metropolis: Paradise Lost." *Nature and Human Societies: Southern United States: An Environmental History*. Eds. Donald E. Davis, et al. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006. 159-82. Print.
- . *Where There Are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000. Print.
- Deliverance*. Dir. John Boorman. Perf. Jon Voight, Burt Reynolds, Ned Beatty, and Ronny Cox. Warner Bros., 1972. Film.
- Derosa, Aaron. "Cultural Trauma, Evolution, and America's Atomic Legacy in Silko's *Ceremony*." *Journal of Literary Theory* 6.1 (2012): 41-64. Print.
- Dickey, James. *Deliverance*. 1970. London: Bloomsbury, 2005. Print.
- Dykeman, Wilma. *The French Broad*. New York: Rinehart & Company, 1955. Print.
- Entzminger, Betina. "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Ed Gentry." *The Southern Literary Journal* 40.1 (2007): 98-113. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholy." *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva*. Ed. Jennifer Radden. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- . "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II) (1914)." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. Joan Riviere. Vol. 12. New York: Vintage, 2001. 145-156. Print.

- Fuller, R. Buckminster. "Spaceship Earth." *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau*. Ed. Bill McKibben. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2008. 464-468. Print.
- Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: Georgia University Press, 1996. Print.
- "Global Change: Great Acceleration." *International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme*. International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, n.d. Web. 4 Apr. 2015.
- Guillemin, Georg. *The Pastoral Vision of Cormac McCarthy*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004. Print.
- Heise, Ursula K. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.
- Holloway, David. *The Late Modernism of Cormac McCarthy*. West Port: Greenwood Press, 2002. Print.
- Houser, Heather. *Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction: Environment and Affect*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. Print.
- Huang, Hsinya. "Towards Transnational Native American Literary Studies." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*. 13.2 (2011): n. pag. Web. 23 Mar 2015.
- James, Jennifer C. "Ecomelancholia: Slavery, War, and Black Ecological Imaginings." *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*. Eds. Stephanie LeMenager, Teresa Shewry, and Ken Hiltner. New York: Routledge, 2011. 163-78. Print.
- Kidner, David W. *Nature and Psyche: Radical Environmentalism and the Politics of Subjectivity*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2001. Print.
- Kolodny, Annette. "Unearthing Her Story." Glotfelty and Fromm 170-181.

- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982. Print.
- LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Print.
- Luce, Diane C. *Reading the World: Cormac McCarthy's Tennessee Period*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009. Print.
- Matthiessen, Peter. *Indian Country*. New York: Penguin, 1992 (1984). Print.
- McCarthy, Cormac. *Suttree*. 1979. New York: Vintage, 1992. Print.
- McCoy, Karissa. "Whiteness and the 'Subject' of Waste: The Art of Slumming in *Suttree*." Wallach 136-144.
- Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona. "Unnatural Passions? Notes Toward a Queer Ecology." *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture*. n. vol. (2005): n. pag. Web. 20 Nov. 2012.
- Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. Print.
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013. Print.
- O'Gorman, Farrell. "Joyce and Contesting Priesthoods in *Suttree* and *Blood Meridian*." Wallach. 87-96.
- Pisters, Patricia. *The Matrix of Visual Culture: Working with Deleuze in Film Theory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. Print.
- Plato. "Cratylus." *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Trans. Harold N. Fowler. Vol. 12. London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1921. Web. 17 Nov. 2014.

<<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0172%3Atext%3DCrat.%3Asection%3D402a>>.

“Poor Water Quality.” *DamEffects*. Hydropower Reform Coalition, 2009. Web. 4 Apr. 2015.

Prather, William. “‘The color of this life is water’: History, the River and the Tennessee Valley Authority in *Suttree*.” Wallach 27-41. Print.

Rawls, James J. *Chief Red Fox is Dead: A History of Native Americans Since 1945*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996. Print.

Rust, Stephen A., and Carter Soles. “Ecohorror Special Cluster: ‘Living in Fear, Living in Dread, Pretty Soon We’ll All Be Dead.’” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 21.3 (2014): 509-12. Print.

Satterlee, Michelle. “Landscape Imagery and Memory in the Narrative of Trauma: A Closer Look at Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*.” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 13.2 (2006): 73-92. Print.

Schweninger, Lee. *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Land*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008. Print.

---. “Writing Nature: Silko and Native Americans as Nature Writers.” *MELUS* 18.2 (1993): 47-60. Print.

Seegert, Natasha. “Dirty Pretty Trash: Confronting Perceptions through the Aesthetics of the Abject.” *The Journal of Ecocriticism: A New Journal of Nature, Society and Literature* 6.1 (2014). Web. 30 Aug. 2014.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. 1977. New York: Penguin, 2006. Print.

- . "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories." *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. 25-47. Print.
- . "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination." Glotfelty and Fromm 264-275.
- Stoll, Steven. "Introduction." *U.S. Environmentalism since 1945: A Brief History with Documents*. New York: Bedford/ St. Martins, 2006. Print.
- Wallach, Rick, ed. *You Would Not Believe What Watches: Suttree and Cormac McCarthy's Knoxville*. n.p.: The Cormac McCarthy Society, n.d. Print.
- Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself." *Walt Whitman: Selected Poems*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: The Library of America, 2003. Print.
- "Why We Remove Dams: Dam Effects on Rivers." *AmericanRivers*. American Rivers: Rivers Connect Us, 2014. Web. 4 Apr. 2015.
- Wrede, Theda. "Nature and Gender in James Dickey's *Deliverance*: An Ecofeminist Reading." *The Way We Read James Dickey: Critical Approaches for the Twenty-first Century*. Eds. William B. Thesing and Theda Wrede. Columbia: South Carolina University Press, 2009. 177-92. Print.
- Yaeger, Patricia. "Editor's Column: The Death of Nature and the Apotheosis of Trash; or, Rubbish Ecology." *PMLA* 123.2 (2008): 321-39. Print.

VITA

EDUCATION

University of Houston, Houston, Texas

B.A. English, Classical Studies minor, summa cum laude, University Honors, 2010

Cumulative GPA: 3.84

GPA in Major: 3.85

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Cormac McCarthy’s Underground Men,” Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment, Moscow, Idaho, June 2015

“The River of Hard Knox: Navigating the Devastated Environment(s) of Cormac McCarthy’s Knoxville and Tennessee River,” South Central Modern Language Association, Austin, Texas, October 2014

“‘Receding Like a Horizon’: Empathy, Embodiment, and the Eco-poetry of Forrest Gander,” English Graduate Student Body Colloquium, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi, April 2014

“Fast Times in New Valois: Intersections of Time and Speed in William Faulkner’s *Pylon*,” University of Georgia Graduate Conference, Athens, Georgia, March 2014.

“The Lovesong of a Speed Junkie: Speed, Cyborg Subjectivity, and the Urban Environment in William Faulkner’s *Pylon*,” South Central Modern Language Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 2013

“Resuscitating the Modern Flaneur: Speed and Flanerie in William Faulkner’s *Pylon*,” Southern Writers Southern Writing, Oxford, Mississippi, July 2013

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Modern Language Association, The Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment, South Central Modern Language Association, The Cormac McCarthy Society