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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by William C. Doyle entitled "At Home Here and Abroad: The Rhetoric of Presence and Narratives of Place." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

Michael L. Keene

_____

Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Amy J. Elias

_____

Mary Jo Reiff

_____

John Nolt

_____

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

_____

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

AT HOME HERE AND ABROAD:
THE RHETORIC OF PRESENCE AND NARRATIVES OF PLACE

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

William C. Doyle
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ABSTRACT

Successful nature and travel writing evokes a sense of place, allowing a reader to "see" what he or she has not yet seen or cannot witness. This success depends on a writer's facility with the rhetoric of presence, the ability to develop language that evokes unseen, or as yet unimagined, places. My dissertation analyzes the specific ways that contemporary narratives of place develop presence. While critics have examined presence in narrative nonfiction (Anderson, Winterowd), travel writing (Pratt, O'Loughlin), speech (Mader), and material rhetoric (Jorgensen-Earp, Gross), few—if any—have offered book-length studies on the importance of the rhetoric of presence in place-based narrative nonfiction. This project argues that presence is a central figure in place-based narratives, integral not just for calling forth unseen or as-yet-imagined places but also for developing an author's ethical position.

Chapter One links the rhetoric of presence to Chaim Perelman and Olbrecths-Tyteca's theory of presence, Quintilian's theory of *enargeia*, and Chris Anderson's analysis of creative nonfiction. In Chapter Two, I examine Richard Nelson's *The Island Within* to describe and analyze the catalog of techniques that bioregionalists use to develop the rhetoric of presence. In Chapter Three, I scrutinize work by Pico Iyer to explore whether "global soul" rootlessness necessitates a modified rhetoric of presence. The chapter also examines travel writers' ethical responsibility. Chapter Four considers narrative framing in creative nonfiction and discusses the ways that a writer's presence within a text can facilitate the recreation of material presence. Chapter Five examines

writing about Antarctica in order to answer the following question: How does the rhetoric of presence change to accommodate the peculiar nature of extreme environments in ways that allow readers to experience these places? Additionally, this chapter considers how Antarctic tourism brochures use verbal and visual rhetorics of presence. Chapter Six argues for continued examination of the ways creative nonfiction uses the rhetoric of presence, calls for the continued inclusion of nonfiction narratives of place within composition classes, discusses several class assignments linked to the rhetoric of presence, and offers suggestions for further research.

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> Though these journals remind me of the date, I have long since lost track of the day of the week, and the great events that must be taking place in the world we left behind are as illusory as events from a future century.
>
> — Peter Matthiessen, from *The Snow Leopard*

CHAPTER ONE

Theorizing the Rhetoric of Presence

Geographer Will Graf offers an interesting approach to our understanding of presence, discussing the importance of language for framing questions of science. One of his examples asks us to see the kayak as communication between person and ecosystem ("Home Ground"). What is important from the perspective of presence is the way that Graf draws on communication as both metaphor and material description. His initial frame offers a comparison between the human-kayak-ecosystem relationship and speech and writing, but the communication of which he speaks also suggests not a metaphor, or even the replacement of one semiotic system for another, but a material relationship between person and ecosystem. Seen as a metaphor for language, the kayak allows its occupant to translate, interpret, and understand the workings of an ecosystem.

Seen as one element among many within the matrix of human experience, a kayak becomes an extension of human sensory information. Primarily, this extension is tactile and kinesthetic. We can, for example, know something of currents by the way body-kayak responds. We can also feel the water temperature as it radiates up through hull and transfers to the body. In addition to these less obvious forms of data, the human-kayak subsystem also provides more obvious sensory information about the ecosystem we

might travel through. As I travel down the Estero River, for example, I often hear fish splash in the distance before I see them. I can see the great blue heron wading in a spot that it knows from experience is prime for fishing. The visual cue of the heron's position, seen only from the vantage point of my kayak, allows me to know something of the river's currents and how microhabitats form along its path. In addition—and if, only if, my nose is working well—I might know something of the timing and strength of Estero Bay's tides matched against the river's current by pinpointing the moment and location I begin to smell the brininess of salt water. Physical or human geographers might put such experience to one use, ecologists, biologist or botanists to another use, and creative writers might see, feel, and sense something different in this experience. Each individual's interpretation, however, is predicated on his or her experience with presence in a specific place at a specific time.

This dissertation is an exploration of the rhetoric of presence. The experiences described above are all versions of what we might call materiality or material presence: details of sensuous, lived experience in the world. Much of this dissertation, however, examines the rhetoric of presence, its influences, and its effects. Writers of all kinds, and particularly those who use verisimilitude as a guiding principle, are concerned with the rhetoric of presence. The rhetoric of presence, however, is not just about the strategies a nature writer or travel writer uses to make his or her work appear truthful and real. It is about a host of rhetorical techniques—some of them realistic, some of them not—that allow writers to develop a vivid sense of the places, scenes, and situations they observe and experience. In addition, "the rhetoric of presence" is a useful term for describing the

collection of strategies writers use to develop their ethos and forge connections with readers. For Aristotle, a rhetor demonstrates *ethos*, "whenever speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence," and it is "the controlling factor in persuasion" (1.2.4). As a result, another strong thread within this dissertation is my examination of the way that the narratives I analyze are bounded and shaped by the writers' sense of ethics and ethical obligations. Whatever their differences in terms of techniques, approach, or specific subject matter, many of the writers I discuss share a commitment to and sense of responsibility for the places and cultures that are the subject of their work.

Narrative Immersion in Creative Nonfiction

This first chapter begins with an epigraph from *The Snow Leopard*:

> Though these journals remind me of the date, I have long since lost track of the day of the week, and the great events that must be taking place in the world we left behind are as illusory as events from a future century. (126)

This sentence illustrates a principle I will return to many times, because Peter Matthiessen's prose foregrounds multiple versions of presence. First, but not most important, is the well-known and regularly discussed use of first-person narrative. Matthiessen's use of "me," "I," and "we" provides readers with a narrative frame, and this sentence is one example of how he uses reflection as a means of ethos building. The opening phrase, "Though these journals," offers a moment of deixis, allowing Matthiessen, the autodiegetic narrator, to point toward the act of writing (the "how" of

the narrative) as well as the immediate moment of writing (the "when" of the narrative). This sentence also points Matthiessen and his audience outside of the present, immediate moment of writing to an awareness of other times and other places even though he tells us, "I have long since lost track of the day of the week" (126). Matthiessen further underscores how his presence in Nepal keeps him disconnected from what is happening elsewhere when he writes, "the great events that must be taking place in the world are as illusory as events from a future century" (126). We can further explicate this sentence as follows: Narrator and reader can only be present in this place at this moment. We might distinguish this rhetoric of presence from the way Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca describe presence in terms of argumentation. For them, the "orator must select certain elements on which he focuses attention by endowing them, as it were, with a 'presence'" (289).

While Matthiessen's use of "[t]hese journals" focuses our attention on the present place and time, it also guides readers toward the book's original form: a journal of his trip. Composing a book as a recreation of a journal, a variation of the one used by Henry David Thoreau and Annie Dillard, calls attention to problems of the text and the possible exigencies of its composition. For one, moments like this actually foreground the very thing that travel writing, nature writing, and many personal narratives want us to ignore: their composition occurs after the events they describe. Much of The *Snow Leopard* unfolds in present tense. In one moment, Matthiessen writes:

> We *cross* the river on an old wood bridge and *descend* the Bheri Canyon. Today I *feel* a little sad and a little sick. GS *thinks* this

> *is*…and I *regret*…my gut *feels* as heavy as my spirits, which had been so exhilarated in the snows. (126, emphasis added)

But reflective moments like the one quoted in the epigraph deliberately shatter the "as it happens" illusion of passages like this and draw attention to the rhetoric of presence. Many personal narratives do without such breaks, and in doing so they maintain the illusion from beginning to end. Matthiessen uses "these journal" moments to signal moments of reflection to break the primary narrative. We can read these reflections as cues that we should also pause and reflect on the primary, present tense narrative. Matthiessen continues:

> It is not so much that we are going back in time as that time seems circular, and past and future have lost meaning. I understand much better now Einstein's remark that the only real time is that of the observer, who carries with him his own time and space. (126)

This phrasing suggests that one reason for breaking the illusion is to allow readers a similar reflective space. In order to more fully understand the narrative moments of Matthiessen's text, readers, too, must step back from the immediacy of present-tense narration. The rhetoric of presence is partly about a writer's strategies for developing mimesis. Quintilian's discussion of "vivid illustration" in the *Institutio Oratoria* is one example of this (9.2.40). We should not, however, reduce the rhetoric of presence to a writer's ability to enable readers to visualize events, people, and places in their minds. The rhetoric of presence is more than mimesis; it is also about a writer establishing the authority to speak or write about a given subject. In this sense, the rhetoric of presence is related to *ethos.*

First Person Games: The Rhetoric of Immediacy

The dominant narrative presence in *The Snow Leopard* is Matthiessen. It is also true that Peter Matthiessen relies many times on moments of first person, present tense narrative to create a sense of immediacy that we might associate with *enargeia*. The term comes to us from Quintilian, and as Gerard Hauser describes it, refers to an audience's emotional connection to a particularly vivid image *and* a writer's "stylistic quality that captures the energy of the action occurring in the scene" or image (231). Reading these sentences from Matthiessen's book, readers likely experience a direct correspondence between the act and the narration of the act. In such moments, the illusion of presence holds, and readers experience the details as the narrator does.

Matthiessen often moves between this mode and other modes of narration. For example, the prologue includes extensive use of the first person, but Matthiessen uses, almost exclusively, past tense. The first sentence of the prologue offers a trick: "In late September of 1973, I set out with GS on a journey to the Crystal Mountain" (4). Our inclination is to read the verb phrase "set out" as past tense, but we can easily imagine that the opening phrase describes present action. Minor revision can highlight this reading. "It *is* late September of 1973 and I *set out* with GS on a journey to the Crystal Mountain." I highlight this point, because if we read the first sentence of the prologue as present-tense narrative, then the rest of the prologue becomes a narrative reflection. Either as present or past tense, the first sentence of *The Snow Leopard,* with its "I" moments, establishes a frame of reference for the book, which is paralleled in the last

sentence. “Under the Bodhi Eye, I get on my bicycle again and return along the gray December road to Kathmandu” (321).

One might compare this frame to the other standard model for travel writing, nature writing, and autobiography: first person, past-tense narrative. Revised following this tense, the last sentence of the book would read, “Under the Bodhi Eye, I got on my bicycle again and returned along the gray December road to Kathmandu.” This formulation emphasizes reflection as well as completed and understood action. Using this pattern of development, the narrative acquires the mood of mastery. The narrator has had the opportunity to reflect on the events described and has developed some mastery of them. By contrast, using present tense, first-person narration creates a sense of unmediated experience, a series of experiences not fully understood.

The Snow Leopard also offers examples of other ways in which a writer develops personal presence, like the following sentence: “At sunrise the small expedition meets beneath a giant fig beyond Pokhara—two white sahibs, four sherpas, fourteen porters” (11). This present-tense sentence obscures Matthiessen’s personal presence. Readers imagine his presence, if at all, as reduced—through a kind of cultural metonymy—to one of the “two white sahibs,” a stand-in for imperial and Western culture in Asia. Even the numbers and order of the people described suggest a rhetorical *anticlimax*; it takes four sherpas and fourteen porters to manage the trekking needs of the two sahibs. Matthiessen’s rhetorical distance (though not absence) here allows him to comment on the reality without directly implicating himself.

With a short, declarative sentence, the next paragraph shifts perspective from an observer-based to a participant-based view: "We are glad to go" (11). The rhetorical effect is that we now experience the scenes from "inside" the group, but the perspective does not stay fixed for long as Matthiessen writes, "Confronted with the pain of Asia, one cannot look and cannot turn away" (12). Here, the general "one" replaces the more specific "we," creating a sense of distance and formality at the same time. The pronouns, however, also include the reader. Such shifts in perspective not only allow Matthiessen to alter how his presence develops within the book, but they are also ways for him to connect to readers and shape their understanding of the ethical dimensions of the Nepal trip. This ethical positioning is the direct result of the movement and shifts in perspective.

Double Identification and the Extremes of Enargeia

Such writer-reader interactions connect to presence by way of a rhetorical effect we can label "double-identification." In Matthiessen's case, the short example asks that readers not simply observe the narrative. Instead, they (we) must become part of it, as Matthiessen uses the "one" to include readers within the reflective moment. Gerard Hauser addresses this effect at length when describing Indres Naidoo's *Island in Chains*. The memoir, Hauser suggests, "moves us beyond responding 'as if' to a narrated story," (247), as in the 'these journal' moments of *The Snow Leopard*. Instead, Hauser argues, "we now respond 'as if' present to its scene and participating in it" (247). The effectiveness of narratives of place is due in part because of such double identification, the way the "as if" of reader as auditor and the "as if" of reader as participant in the

action combine. That is, double-identification occurs because of the writer-narrator's use of the myriad techniques and tropes that create both kinds of "as ifs." Hauser's argument is useful to a study of presence because of the way he provides a specific model for how books, specifically narrative nonfiction, can be both objects of study and artifacts that help us interpret the material practices they represent. Hauser uses Naidoo's book as evidence for an argument about the demonstrative material rhetoric practiced by political prisoners at Robben Island. In short, these prisoners used their bodies and physical acts as rhetorical tools instead of words. While I would not want to equate the material experience of Naidoo or other political prisoners with that of Matthiessen and the writers I discuss, Hauser's argument provides an example of the kind of gap that a work like mine fills. Many critics either use the term "presence" in a narrowed sense or use it as a single point towards another argumentative end. By contrast, Hauser's article focuses on the social implications and effects of the rhetoric of presence.

To be sure, it is difficult to study and discuss presence without a connection to other existing rhetorical terms. As Hauser's study suggests, one of the most fruitful terms to explore the ways in which presence is both represented and created is by means of *enargeia.* As Sharpling reminds us, the term refers not to an individual turn of phrase or specific sentence pattern. Instead, it "is a facet of style" (174). Sharpling makes this point in the opening of an article discussing Michel Montaigne's use of *enargeia* as understood from his reading of Erasmus and Quintilian. Terence Cave, in a work cited by Sharpling, explores these issues more generally in "Enargeia: Erasmus and the Rhetoric of Presence in the Sixteenth Century." Paul Julian Smith also examines the use of enargeia in "The

Rhetoric of Presence in Poets and Critics of Golden Age Lyric: Garcilaso, Herrera, Góngora." As Sharpling puts it, however, Erasmus understood *enargeia* in terms of visual description:

> In order for a passage to be considered [*enargeia*], it must articulate a set of formal qualities: the power to evoke a wide range of sense impressions, and hence emotions, from the reader; a range of competing, co-existent details which can be combined into a composite whole; evocative and highly-charged lexis; and a cumulative intensity *which entices the reader into a state of suspense and wonder*. There must also be suitable attention to things (hypotyposis), times (chronographia), places (topographia) and persons (prosopopoeia). (175, emphasis added)

Supplementing this gloss of Erasmus, we can distinguish *topographia,* which Peacham describes as "an evident and true description of a place" (141) from *topothesia* "a fained [sic] description of a place" (141). Lanham's *Handlist* further defines *topothesia* as a "description of an imaginary, nonexistent place" (186). What's interesting about this distinction is that the latter term, according again to Peacham, is "seldom used of orators: and because the use hereof is rare and of small utilitie in Rhetorike, I do omit both the observation of the use, and Caution" (142). It takes little effort to find several examples of how *topothesia* can actually be of great rhetorical utility. If, for instance, we think in terms of general cases of environmental rhetoric, there might be several appropriate uses of such description. What of the frog biologist, asked by a journalist, 'Why should we care if frog species are disappearing?' To which, the biologist might reply by saying the following: 'Imagine a world without frogs. The death of frogs is a warning sign, a symptom of the ill heath of our planet. If all the frogs die, our world might be a place like this.' From there the biologist creates, through *topothesia*, a vivid picture of a place

nearly or completely unlivable for species like humans. This place—despite being based on the best available science—is still imaginary, yet some readers might find the description persuasive, asking what they can do to prevent such an imagined world from becoming the actual world. This is not simply an imagined example. A recent issue of *Wild Wonders,* published by the Knoxville Zoo, incorporates a similar circumstance in an article about the ongoing extinction of frog species. We could also see the opening chapter of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, an example of *topothesia* that operates in a very similar way. Both of these examples are versions of an environmental jeremiad; however, they are not merely a complaint, but serve the purpose to change attitudes and behaviors.[1]

We can also imagine a more hopeful, but equally effective, environmentally inflected use of *topothesia*, the ecotopia. Ernest Callenbach's 1975 novel *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston* is perhaps the most well known literary example, but we can also find other examples from literature and other media in multiple genres.[2] Take, for example, a wildlife biologist's or an ecologist's report on the restoration of a particularly degraded place like the Florida Everglades. Described in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), this real world case of restoration has the state and federal governments spending $7.8 billion over thirty years to return the

[1] Lawrence Buell (*Writing for an Endangered World* among other works), Michael Egan (*Barry Commoner and the Science of Survival*), John Murray ("The Hill Beyond the City: Elements of the Jeremiad in Edward Abbey's 'Down the River with Henry Thoreau'"), Daniel Philippon (*Conserving Words*), and Scott Slovic (in *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing* and other works) all describe the tradition of the environmental jeremiad. Mainstream media have also described *An Inconvenient Truth* as an environmentalist version of the jeremiad (*The Washington Post* 28 May 2006, *Newsweek* 18 June 2007, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* 3 June 2007, and the *New York Post* 7 Nov 2006).

[2] Killingsworth and Palmer's *Ecospeak* offers an analysis of Callenbach's novel, arguing it "has a great deal of potential power as a consciousness-raising rhetorical performance and has more validity as a critique of existing political and social practices than as a guide to future practice" (235).

Everglades to an updated version of ecological health ("CERP: The Plan in Depth"). Such money is not spent hastily—and in the case of the Everglades it was and will be spent only in part because of political expedience. The money for restoration projects gets spent because of the analyses, reports, and topothetic, not topographic, descriptions of what the Everglades will look like and how it will work post-restoration. "Although the future Everglades ecosystem will be a 'new' Everglades because it will be smaller than the pre-drainage system," the CERP Vision Statement argues, "restoration will have been successful if the new system responds to the recovery…by functionally behaving as a wild Everglades system rather than as a set of managed, disconnected wetlands." Here, the description—modulated through scientific and bureaucratic discourse with its emphasis on technical 'recovery'—works on a general level, evoking only a broad-stroke version of a new and different, but still "wild," place.

Within other documents, however, CERP offers very specific visual descriptions of an imagined, restored Everglades, beginning with a moment of temporal *deixis* and moving toward a level of *enargeia* of which Quintilian, Erasmus, or even Henry Peacham might be proud:

> Twenty years from now, today's children should have the opportunity as adults to visit this majestic and captivating ecosystem and see its expansive sawgrass marshes and towering blue skies. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan will ensure the River of Grass will be a healthier place than it is today, and one which will remain strong and vital in the future. ("Why Restore - Part 6")

Here, the reason provided for a restored Everglades is based on ethical responsibility ("today's children should"), and the description mixes general and specific terms

("majestic," "captivating," and "healthier" versus "expansive sawgrass marshes" and "towering blue skies"). While some might argue that this moment is not truly vivid and that even the specific descriptive phrases are too brief, we should consider the fact that in only two sentences, the CERP authors have provided a specific sense of time, offered a complex set of descriptive terms (from "expansive" alone, readers can gather a sense of sawgrass stretching for miles in every direction), relied on at least one evocative commonplace ("River of Grass"), and contrasted the current degraded state of the ecosystem with its proposed future health. All this adds up to a brief but effective example of how writers can use *topothesia* to achieve a meaningful sense of presence for readers, even those unfamiliar with the poorly functioning, remnant Everglades of today. *Topothesia*, then, becomes a constituent part of the rhetoric of presence because of the way it acts not just to transport the reader to another contemporary actual place, but because of the way it can transport readers to imagined and future places.

That there is such possibility in a little used—for Peacham, at least— and lowly form of description brings up a related point made in Sharpling's analysis when he writes, "The examples [of the essays] outlined here permit Montaigne to explore the relationship between visual and non-visual dimensions of experience, and the relational connection between example and argument" (191). Sharpling's point is that Montaigne's writing maintains an awareness of the potential for words to misrepresent or fail to fully represent visual detail with a sense of "documentary realism." Montaigne's writing relies on techniques that add up to enargeia and moments where "the meaning of visual representation can be contested"(191). This balancing, shifting sense of the power and

limits of the visual, Sharpling argues, is all part of Montaigne's "quest for authenticity" (191). While the excerpts from CERP do not exhibit the same theoretical self-awareness as do Montaigne's essays, they do provide examples of the ways in which a rhetoric of presence can move beyond the merely visual to develop a sense of *enargeia* in readers. I don't mean to exclude visual representation from the rhetoric of presence. Instead, I merely want to suggest that a more complete rhetoric of presence must be mindful of the other ways in which material presence can and is represented in writing.

In the second CERP excerpt, the move beyond the visual is based on language that highlights not simply the visual—although visual description is a large part of the passage—but also the material presence of people within a landscape, so the verb "visit" comes before "see" in the passage; however, the passage also foregrounds another kind of presence. In the second sentence, the value of the Everglades is not extrinsic, something that should exist for future generations to experience and see. Instead, it takes on an intrinsic value as the health and vitality of the ecosystem is uncoupled from material human experience. Here, then, is language that seeks not to present or represent human experience, but to record, ensure, and even—perhaps—honor the continued presence of nonhuman nature. We might even label such language use "soft environmental rhetoric, "because of the way it is positioned in the passage. The rhetoric is environmentally soft because the passage emphasizes duties to humans before duties to ecosystems. By contrast, a "hard environmental rhetoric" might emphasize ecological health over human interests. Seen this way, the first duty of restoration as described in the passage is to respect for future humans (a potentially more effective political argument). Only after

this respect is recognized do the CERP authors acknowledge a respect for and suggest an implicit duty to nonhuman nature.

Nonfiction Narrative as Argument

Up to this point, I have discussed several basic ways we might examine the rhetoric of presence: through the everyday ways that sensory experience influences—and in some cases focuses—our understanding of the world, a writer's presence (as narrator and as character) within a text, by discerning the connection between a text and a reader's sense of double-identification, and according to *enargeia*'s rhetorical role. I have also, briefly, introduced the connection between the rhetoric of presence and calls (both explicit and implicit) to ethical responsibility. Finally, the preceding discussion of Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* serves as an introduction to genre concerns. What this dissertation offers is a consideration of the ways in which the theory of the rhetoric of presence is useful for examining forms of creative nonfiction. Specifically, it explores the ways that we can use an expanded theory of the rhetoric of presence to better understand two related subgenres of narrative nonfiction: nature writing and travel writing. These subgenres are hybrid forms, drawing on each other's interconnected traditions and on other literary and nonliterary genres. Likewise, this dissertation is a hybrid, drawing on research and theory in rhetoric, composition, literary studies, environmental studies, philosophy, and geography and it is my hope that members of each of these groups will find something of value and of interest in what follows.

There are many starting points for this work, and I have already suggested several. If, however, I were to point to a single moment that served as the catalyst for my own interest and research into the connections between narrative nonfiction and the rhetoric of presence, it would be when I read Chris Anderson's *Style as Argument*. For Anderson, literary nonfiction has taken over the moral work of the novel in its "efforts to persuade us to attitudes, interpretations, opinions, and action" (2). In his first chapter, Anderson analyzes Tom Wolfe's "rhetorical intensifications and strategies of presence" (4). Drawing on the work of Chaim Perelman, Anderson argues that Wolfe "resort[s] to all the various strategies in the rhetorical repertoire for magnifying presence," because the subjects and situations he writes about (Kesey's Merry Pranksters, test pilots, Las Vegas) outstrip language's ability to represent them (17-18). As a result, these strategies come into play as "substitute[s] for strategies of proof or analysis" (32). As his title suggests, Anderson's argument is that the language itself—in its style and form—becomes as much an argument as the content of the narrative. What separates Anderson's point from classical rhetoricians' discussion of style is that he focuses on the specific ways that creative nonfiction uses style to develop arguments. Not every author exhibits Wolfe's level of stylistic pyrotechnics, but we can still examine the ways they use the rhetoric of presence as part of their argument.

In its most basic form, the rhetoric of presence includes two dimensions. Robert Root and Michael Steinberg use the phrase "personal presence" to capture this two-fold meaning. The first of these connects to *enargeia*, applying to an author's richness of description about specific events and locations. Personal presence is more, however, than

vivid visual detail. Katrina O'Loughlin—describing English women in the eighteenth century—suggests that personal presence is the way that these travelers "writ[e] themselves in as a physical presence…to claim eyewitness authority for their observations" (420). These writers embody themselves through their writing, authorizing their presence. In effect, writing about the physicality of travel or, as O'Loughlin mentions, announcing oneself in an introduction or preface as the author of a particular text, validates both the text and the writer's bodily experience that are the text's subject, so the "heightened self-consciousness of the traveller's body propels it both to the centre of the text, and to the writer's negotiation of the cultural and corporeal diversity encountered while abroad" (420). Mary Louise Pratt also uses the phrase "rhetoric of presence," relating it to a "particularly explicit interaction between esthetics and ideology" so that "the esthetic qualities of the landscape constitute the social and material value of the discovery to the explorers' home culture, at the same time as its esthetic deficiencies suggest a need for social intervention by the home culture" (205). In this version, authorization is as much about mapping one's home culture onto a place in which one is physically present and justification for establishing an ongoing imperialist presence as it is an attempt to verify one's physical presence in a place. In Pratt's understanding, the rhetoric of presence's power is in the way it utilizes actual, material space as a site for mediating between two cultures, with the assumption that the imperial explorer's culture is the standard of measurement. When developing this argument, Pratt uses Richard Burton's *Lake Regions of Central Africa* as the epitome of the "monarch-of-all-I-survey genre" (201).

The rhetoric of presence, however, is not simply a writer's description of somatic awareness or even the awareness and description of others' bodies transferred to language. Nor is the rhetoric of presence merely the expression or linguistic marker of imperialism. In fact, the phrase occurs beyond literary studies. In "Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence," one of the most-cited articles related to the phrase, Anne Wagner explores the way that several artists' works ask or require audiences and subjects—in some cases willing, in others unknowing—to become participants in or interact with the performance. Near the end of her article, Wagner asks these questions:

> How can a work make itself public? Can object and viewer still continue to be so efficiently *present* to each other, so mutually absorbed?…Can the old requirement—art's need for witnesses—continue to be sustained? And, if so, with what measure of vividness and veracity? Does confidence in the directness of vision really survive translation and reproduction by technological media? (74, author's emphasis)

While these questions relate, in most cases, to non-textual forms of art and performance, we can readily see connections to the types of narrative performance evident in many cases of creative nonfiction. While it's an obvious point, it bears restating that book-length and short-form works of creative nonfiction, like the works Wagner describes, are technologically mediated experiences. Likewise, Wagner's questions are ones we might ask texts, particularly texts that purport to document the actual experiences of their authors. In this postmodern and post-James Frey world, what assurances do readers have that the words they read are the textual versions of an actual, material presence? And in what way do writers seek to mitigate the problems of textual mediation or work to gain or maintain readers' confidence in the texts they encounter? If all texts are performances,

then what assurances do writers and readers have that the presences these texts reconstruct are true or—to borrow from Wagner—vivid and veracious?

We can find a partial answer in the second half of the meaning of Root and Steinberg's phrase "personal presence." For them, the term also describes the way a "reader is taken on a journey into the mind and personality of the writer" (xxiv). In their introduction to *The Fourth Genre*, Root and Steinberg list four, additional "pronounced common elements": self-discovery and self-exploration, veracity, flexibility of form, and literary approaches to language (xxiv). Veracity, for example, is a sense of truthfulness in creative nonfiction. Writers might not, or might not be able, to depict the facts as they happen, but their work should still display a sense of truthfulness. Such a definition seems to account for the flaws and problems of memory. Stepping back, we might label the two dimensions of personal presence as follows: presence of scene and presence of person. Presence of scene is presence in the way that O'Loughlin describes, connecting to the classical understanding of *enargeia*. By contrast, presence of person refers to those specific moments in which a writer directly addresses a reader—as in the case of an author's introduction or preface—or to those moments of reflection in a text, where a writer pauses to examine his or her role in the narrative. Think, for example, of Matthiessen's "these journal" moments.

Ross Winterowd—who, along with Anderson, has done much to describe the rhetoric of literary nonfiction—describes presence in another way, one that seems to combine Quintilian and Perelman with the twinned version of Root and Steinberg. For Winterowd, presence is, "that property that gives arguments status, vividness, and

'extralogical' power." It is this power that Anderson describes in Wolfe's prose. Winterowd goes on to argue for "three aspects [to presence]. First, the act of attention confers presence; that is, whatever we pay attention to in a text gains presence. Second, images create presence. Third, presence is conferred by holism" (45-6). I take Winterowd's last point to means something like a sense of the way that vivid description of an individual detail becomes virtual proof of a larger event or truth. Winterowd's third "aspect" of presence applies to the writers O'Loughlin discusses. Taken as a whole, however, Winterowd's definition of presence connects most closely to presence in Perelman and Olbrecths-Tyteca's sense of the term, and Winterowd makes a specific case for its use as a technique of persuasion. Later, when discussing Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, Winterowd writes, "Herr, like all poets, is confronting the paradox of unsayability, a fact that he well realizes. And what is a lyric [whether in poetry or prose], essentially, but the attempt to say the unsayable?" (64) What Winterowd links to the lyrical, Anderson—drawing on Longinus—links to the sublime. Both critics, however, describe a rhetoric whereby writers attempt to describe the indescribable, and both critics (Anderson on Wolfe's prose and Winterowd on Herr's) attempt to account for the techniques of establishing the presence of events and ideas that are, in some way, unknowable. Presence, of course, is as much about describing both the knowable and verifiable as it is about describing the unknowable.

Why the Rhetoric of Presence?

What my dissertation shares with the arguments of Winterowd and Anderson is an acknowledgment that the rhetoric of presence creates a foundation for the ways in which narrative nonfiction shapes its argument—even in those cases where an explicit or overt argument does not exist. I share their interest in narrative nonfiction as a form of argument. What separates my dissertation from arguments made by Anderson and Winterowd—as well as other literary critics and rhetoricians who mention or describe presence—are the specific ways in which I reevaluate, synthesize, and expand these critics' view of presence. This is why I mention, draw on, and refer to the work of critics like O'Loughlin, Pratt, Root, and Steinberg.[3] In subsequent chapters, I put these views of presence, and my modified version of them, to the test by applying them to other texts. My approach also differs from the one taken by Anderson, Winterowd, and writer-critics like Norman Sims, Lee Gutkind, Barbara Lounsberry, and Tom Wolfe, because my dissertation *focuses* on writers' use of presence instead of examining it as one strategy among many or mentioning it quickly and moving on. In addition, instead of looking at overall conceptions of creative nonfiction as a genre, my exploration involves claims related to a more specific set of texts: nonfiction narratives of place. Finally, I am interested in the ways that rhetoric of presence might describe or account for its effects on the material world.

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[3] My dissertation attempts to synthesize and add to existing versions of the rhetoric of presence articulated by these critics, work by Kenneth Burke and Chaim Perelman, and the casual, but no less important, discussions by people like Barry Lopez. An even fuller discussion of "presence," however, would include not only these critics and theorists but also work by, among others Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Jacques Derrida, George Steiner, and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht.

For example, in *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World*, Scott Russell Sanders writes, "I aspire to become an inhabitant, one who knows and honors the land. …I am always driven by a single desire, that of learning to be at home" (xiii-xiv). Put another way, Sanders describes the desire for a depth of material presence, the full, experiential knowledge of one who dwells within a particular place. This richness of place knowledge that comes from physical, individual sensory experience relates to the now common—but variously defined—phrase *sense of place*. Kent Ryden suggests, "[a] sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing history within its confines" (38). For him "sense of place" is developed by an individual's connection to landscape. By contrast, J.B. Jackson refers to "sense of place" as something shared and developed by a culture (151). Sanders' view falls somewhere in between, and he makes it clear that this depth of material presence draws not only on the natural history of a particular place, but also its familial and cultural history. For instance, one might on one's own discover the physical features and come to know the specific plants and animals of a place, but Sanders also argues that material presence— dwelling—is connected to the immaterial (like one's emotional or spiritual attachment) and built elements of such a place. We can also refer to depth of material presence as "rootedness," a deep knowledge of and habitation in a particular place. Cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argues for a distinction between the terms ("Rootedness"), but I will use these terms interchangeably. Nelson and Sanders compose narratives that claim rootedness is the antidote for the literal and

metaphorical rootlessness of contemporary Western culture. This is a claim shared by writers like Wendell Berry, Rick Bass, and Janisse Ray.

Other writers (like Jan Morris and Pico Iyer) suggest that a certain kind of purposeful wandering and exploration of human and natural environments can lead us to know ourselves and our places better. This is not, however, an either/or distinction, but rather two paths that explore the value in different kinds of presence. It should be no surprise, then, that Sanders' own position moves from rootlessness—"I've been lost in ways no map could remedy. I cannot return to my native ground and take up residence there" (xiv)—to one of rootedness: "If I am to have a home, it can only be a place I have come to as an adult, a place I have chosen" (xiv). Wandering and selection—choices not open to everyone—are for Sanders preliminary steps toward becoming rooted. Near the end of his preface, Sanders offers a way to think about not just his text—and the material process it describes—but texts by other writers:

> The work of belonging to place is never finished. There will always be more to know than any mind or lifetime can hold. But that is no argument against learning all one can. What I understand so far I have gathered into these narratives, which are bound together by the ancient plot of a journey into the wilderness in search of vision. The wilderness I seek is always underfoot, and the power I seek flows in with every breath. We cannot lay hold of the sacred; we can only point toward it, say where we have glimpsed it. This book points through my local ground to the shapely energies we call nature, and through nature to the encompassing order for which we have no adequate name. (xvi-xvii)

While Sanders' prose has more than a trace of neo-romantic language, that same language includes several important concerns that my dissertation will address:

- The continued importance of narratives for defining or coming to know place-centeredness. That is, these narratives (for place-based writers) serve an epistemological function—one that both adds to and helps shape the experiences described—and their composition contributes to an individual's rootedness.
- The deictic quality inherent in much place-based writing. These narratives of the experiences point toward deeper knowledge, other places (and times), and other narratives. The moments of *deixis* often serve as frameworks for these narratives, but their use and the referents to which they point also develop a map of reading, tools to help the author guide readers through the argument embedded within these narratives.
- The way that such narratives often attempt to reveal or suggest, if not directly articulate, the unseen or inexpressible. We can think here not only of the way Sanders mentions "the shapely energies we call nature," but also the way Anderson suggests that Wolfe's prose finds "substitute[s] for strategies of proof or analysis."
- The idea that place-based writing is often a quest without an end; it is "work," in Sanders' words, that "is never finished." The quest in the narrative often either leads directly to another quest or suggests the need for another quest. In this way, many of these narratives are clearly rhetorical in that they prompt readers to act, to change their attitudes, or to do both.

Part of the rhetorical power of texts by Sanders and Nelson comes from the ways that they translate or transfer material experience into language. One everyday version of their success with this translation is when a reader says to someone "I felt as if I were

there," but the manner in which this happens is through a writer's facility with the constituent techniques of the rhetoric presence. Anderson describes some of the rhetorical techniques for developing presence, but I would argue that presence exists in degrees. Not only can writers create a sense in the reader that he or she knows the place described (or knows something of the way that a particular author has experienced that place), but writers can also mediate in multiple ways the manner in which readers experience presence. The most obvious technique for creating presence, as Chris Anderson, among others, has pointed out, is present tense narration: *I walk down the narrow pathway switching my focus between the steps I'm taking and the mountain landscape beyond.* I would argue, however, that writers also create a sense of presence in various kinds of reflective moments in their texts. Recall, for instance, the example from *The Snow Leopard* that began this chapter and the way that Matthiessen uses "these journals" moments to call attention to various kinds of presence. Readers are likely to understand such moments in a text not as reflection after the fact, but the views of a writer reflecting about events either as they happen or within the larger narrative of the book. That is, reading such words evokes immediacy, regardless of whether the passage was actually composed at the moment or after the fact, in a hotel room or—even later—at a home office. This kind of immediacy, just like present-tense narration, leads to a sense of presence.

Rationale and Relevance

Presence may be the core of this dissertation, but my analysis of work by a handful of contemporary nature and travel writers also offers a foundation for exploring other relevant issues. One general claim of my dissertation is this: while rich critical traditions exist that explore the separate histories of and current work in nature and travel writing, a much smaller body of work examines the links between them. Some critics have linked them under the still useful term "place-based writing," but this term tends to emphasize external descriptions and downplays the ways in which author-narrators are central connecting features of these works. That is, we should also remember that such writing is as much about an individual's interaction with place as about the place encountered. Thomas Lyon, for one, highlights this when he charts his taxonomy of nature writing. His core characteristics of nature writing all rely on the observer's perspective, but two of them, "personal response to nature" and "philosophical interpretations of nature" (20), underscore the claim I make here.

While I expect to develop arguments that have broader, genre-based implications and speak to ongoing conversations in literary studies (particularly work in creative nonfiction), cultural geography, and philosophy, my project—at heart—is rhetorical. It begins with a single question: what rhetorical choices get made in these texts—particularly as they relate to articulating presence—and how are these choices related to the writers' ethical position(s)? How do, for example, Redmond O'Hanlon, Bill Bryson, and Tim Cahill use humor and incompetence as deliberate rhetorical strategies not just in ways that keep readers reading, but also to confuse and perhaps overwrite the

imperialist, all-knowing voice found in earlier narratives of travel and exploration—texts whose language works to develop or suggest a "mastery of landscape" (Sheller 52)? Does Pico Iyer's description of the global soul address a rhetorical need by offering a roadmap for what individuals should be, or can it be seen as a specific response, an alterative to the call by Scott Sanders, and others, for "learning to be at home." This second question is relevant because despite stylistic and thematic differences, both Iyer and Sanders frame their books as a search for home. *The Global Soul* and *Staying Put,* in fact, begin with the literal destruction of a home (Iyer's by a California wildfire and Sanders' by the water of a new reservoir). If the above questions sketch some of the outline of my dissertation's first chapter, the general approach I will take when examining the texts and authors mentioned below is to ask a Bitzerian question: what's the situation that would prompt such a narrative? This, in addition to leading to the questions I ask of Sanders' writing, also suggests the following questions that will guide my research and writing:

- How does describing the rhetorics of place, presence, and immediacy account for the style of these narratives and to what use can such descriptions be put? A more refined version of this question might be as follows: How does thinking about these kinds of rhetoric offer new ways to think about existing genres and how does it help define emergent ones?
- What's at stake rhetorically—and ethically—in recreating physical and cultural (and, perhaps, personal) landscapes in narrative nonfiction? To what extent, for example, is a writer like Pico Iyer (who wrote a short essay about the staggering number of airline miles he's accumulated) simply, as someone like David Spurr might argue,

reinforcing the rhetoric of empire? How might work by Richard Nelson, Sara Wheeler, or Jon Krakauer actually end up *promoting* the kinds of land use and consumption patterns their narratives seem to argue against?

- What are the issues of writer-audience relationship that emerge from examining the rhetorical choices of these works? For example, do all of the works suggest that readers come to know place in the same way? How do these writers frame their works for readers through the use—or lack—of introductions and other editorial and rhetorical techniques (like Peter Matthiessen's self-reflexive moments)?

Chapter Outline

Each of the subsequent chapters, then, has at its heart a rhetorical analysis of at least one author, examining the rhetoric of presence and associate issues of ethos from a particular angle. Some chapters highlight the techniques and results of the rhetoric of presence. Other chapters focus on the interplay between ethics and ethos within nonfiction narrative. Read as a whole, these chapters blend work in rhetoric, literary criticism and theory, ethics, and environmental studies to add to the existing scholarship related to the rhetoric of presence.

To that end, Chapter Two, "The World Right Here: Making the Northwest (or Wherever One is) Home," begins with Scott Russell Sanders' conception of place and home as well as a discussion of Wendell Berry and other bioregional writers. In general terms, bioregionalism theorizes an ethic based on the value of knowing and living the local.

These contemporary bioregionalists can be seen as literary and ethical descendants of Thoreau. These individuals react against unconsidered homogenization of culture at the expense of regional and local differences. Some such critiques, such as Barry Lopez's "The American Geographies" or Bill McKibbon's *The Age of Missing Information*, are overt arguments against the national and increasingly international habit of long-distance consumption and distancing ourselves from the immediate like. Other works, such as Richard Nelson's *The Island Within*, focus on expressing the pleasure of the local.

While overt cultural critique exists in *The Island Within*, Nelson's "guide for non travel" attempts to address the persistent false binary between nature and culture by arguing for a depth of local knowledge that acknowledges the place of human culture within the ecology of a particular bioregion. His primary rhetorical strategy, shared by other bioregionalists, is not to attack or argue against a position, but to affirm presence and immediacy. Using Nelson's book—and his embedded narrative of the transplanted Midwesterner—as the heart of this chapter, I describe and analyze the catalog of techniques that bioregionalists use to develop a rhetoric of presence.

Chapter Three, "The World Out There: Pico Iyer and The Global Soul," refers to Iyer's book of the same name and draws on the rooted-rootless distinction that's prominent in discussions of nature and travel writing as well as work by cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. In this chapter, I'll argue that a rootless perspective is just as much about being at home (or at *place*) in the world—wherever one is—as it is about placelessness, hybridity,

and adaptation. We might also imagine rootlessness not as lack, longing, or potential, but as a positive, present, and immediate quality. As Iyer writes:

> I began to wonder whether a new kind of being might not be coming to light—a citizen of this International Empire—made up of fusions (and confusions) we had not seen before; a "Global Soul" in a less exalted (and more intimate sense, more vexed) sense than the Emersonian one. The creature could be a person who had grown up in many cultures all at once—and so lived in the cracks between them—or might be one who, though rooted in background, lived and worked on a globe that propelled him from tropics to snowstorm in three hours. (18)

This chapter explores the ways that such a "Global Soul" might articulate presence if, in fact, an individual does not, or cannot, develop a deep and direct connection with a particular location. I examine Iyer's *The Global Soul* to explore whether such "global soul" rootlessness necessitates a modified rhetoric of presence. The chapter also examines the explicit and implicit forms of ethical responsibility on the part of the travel writer and travel writing. Iyer's writing, for instance, offers an alternative to the expected, typical, easily accessible, or prevailing views (a point of view that distinguishes such travel writing from guidebook writing).

Another recurrent theme in Iyer's work is the ongoing influence of empire, colonialism, and globalism. In some of his writing, this influence is addressed through irony-laden humor, as in his portrait of British expatriates in Hong Kong. In other moments, it's addressed through a combination of confusion and understanding, as in this passage about Japan, his adopted home:

> The newly mobile world and its porous borders are a particular challenge to a uniculture like Japan, which depends for its presumed survival upon its firm distinctions and clear

> boundaries…[a]nd it's not always easy for me to explain that it's precisely that ability to draw strict lines around itself—to sustain an unbending sense of within and without—that draws me to Japan (*The Global Soul* 278).

Following from Iyer, there is a class of writers that seem well aware of the imperial implications of their travels. In Chapter Four, "Adventure Travel, Misadventure, and *Outside* Magazine," I examine the overt self-consciousness of narrative voice in Tim Cahill's work. This chapter focuses on the ways that the writer's presence within a text can add dimension to and facilitate the recreation of material presence. As Pico Iyer writes, the magic of Cahill's prose is that he "so excel[s] at passing on [his] excitement about the road that we will travel anywhere with [him]" (*BATW 2004* xxiii). This is the case not only for Cahill, but also for writers like Bill Bryson and Redmond O'Hanlon. All of them use humor and exaggeration as part of their narratives. Their narratives can also be amazingly self-conscious, including thoughtful, self-reflexive passages that reflect on the meaning of the adventures they have and the places and people they encounter. Part of this chapter examines such reflective moments to see how they at least acknowledge or address the kinds of imperialist language use Mary Louise Pratt and David Spurr discuss in their work. That is, how do these texts explain the problems associated with the material presence of their writers? The chapter ends with a brief analysis of *Outside* magazine that examines the magazine's schizophrenic relationship with a natural world it purports to celebrate.

Chapter Five, “In the Presence of Extreme Environments,” examines the writing about Antarctica in order to answer the following question: How does the rhetoric of presence change to accommodate writers’ experiences in extreme environments in ways that allow readers to experience these places? Additionally, this chapter considers the ethical dimension of such writing by looking at the way that tour operators use the rhetoric of presence. In what ways, for example, do they ask prospective visitors to see and imagine Antarctica?

Chapter Six, “Getting Outside: Conclusions and the Classroom,” argues for the continued examination of creative nonfiction’s use of the rhetoric of presence as well as the ethical dimensions of such work. In addition, I call for the continued use of creative nonfiction within composition classes, particularly those works that explore place, and offer a few suggestions for additional research. Finally, I discuss several assignments from my own classes.

> I also have to ask where the natural resources in my Gore-tex shell and hiking boots come from—the oil, stone, metals, and animal skins in my twenty-first-century hiker gear, which keeps me warm and dry and makes my closet look like an REI outlet. How do they connect me to the global transformation of nature? And how do they shape my experience of hiking? The Simple Life out in nature is complex as hell.
>
> — Jennifer Price, from "Thirteen Ways Of Seeing Nature In L.A."

> You don't want to do anything as drastic or volatile as mixing humor with nature; that wouldn't be proper, wouldn't be safe. When I speak to someone else about giving a talk, she tells me that, "We only deal with nature here and we don't want anything political," as if, in this day and age, the two could possibly be pulled apart.
>
> — David Gessner, from *Sick of Nature*

CHAPTER TWO

The World Right Here: Making The Northwest (Or Wherever One Is) Home

While Price and Gessner argue for expanded definitions of nature writing, much contemporary nature writing still has roots in and shows its true colors by sticking close to natural history: careful first-person observation of the world. Field biology shares this practice, amassing thousands and thousands of data points during the careful, long, and often tedious process of waiting, watching, and recording. We should remember, however, that much of what field biologists do is the sometimes impressionistic work of noting and interpreting animal behavior that cannot easily be quantified as can recording the exact amount of time a particular bird spends on a particular branch in a particular tree. In their attempts to record what they see, hear, and smell, nature writer and field biologist alike shape our understanding of the material world every time they make a choice of one descriptive word or phrase over another or one organizational scheme over

another. This limitation, even in the work of thorough and meticulous researchers, is one practical reason to value contributions by scientific ecology: studying the relationships between parts and whole (an act of interpretation in itself) can allow us to recognize and understand things we would not otherwise know.

By developing a richer picture of what nature writing is and how it's practiced, such efforts also remind us that—for many—nature writing as a genre is an ecological act, or in Sid Dobrin's words, "writing takes place" (22). It is easy to make the jump from this claim to one that regards all acts of writing as ecological acts.[4] Such a view simply expands the notion of either a transactional or epistemic view of rhetoric, adding that location—the places from which we write—is as important as other elements of the rhetorical situation. Another way to put this is to think of place as an alternative term to "scene" in Kenneth Burke's pentad. In *A Grammar of* Motives, Burke define scene as "the background of the act [plot or what happens], the situation in which it occurred" (xv). Scene, then, becomes the context for dramatic action, but ecocritical versions of Burke's theory add or include ecological contexts to social contexts. A special issue of *K.B. Journal* edited by Robert Wess explores ecocritical uses of Burkean theory, but Randall Roorda ("K.B. In Green: Ecology, Critical Theory, and Kenneth Burke"), Gregory Clark (*Rhetorical Landscapes in America)*, and S. Michael Halloran with Clark and others ("Thomas Cole's Vision of 'Nature' and the Conquest Theme in American

[4] Along with Dobrin (whose article in *Ecocomposition* is entitled "Writing Takes Place"), Marilyn Cooper and Anis Bawarshi examine the connections between ecology and writing.

Culture" and "National Park Landscapes and the Rhetorical Display of Civic Religion"), have all used Burkean theory in ecocritical ways.

Nature Writing, Bioregionalism, and the Importance of Place

The link between this view of place and nature writing comes because many nature writers openly express a bioregionalist point of view. In doing so, they rely on the rhetoric of presence to create a detailed scene or sense of place. Bioregionalist philosophy suggests that we should consider the local and near at hand. Jim Dodge suggests bioregionalism defines boundaries based on living systems not political ones: "Etymologically…bioregionalism means life territory, place of life, or perhaps by reckless extension, government by life" (231). Dodge further defines the view as one that focuses on "the importance given to natural systems, both as the source of physical nutrition and as the body of metaphors from which our spirits draw sustenance" (231). While many political boundaries overlap physical features like rivers and ridgelines, others are arbitrary, like lines of latitude and longitude. By contrast bioregionalism suggests that recognized boundaries should be natural, not political. The local watershed, for example, is one common way to define a particular bioregion. Like political boundaries, bioregional boundaries can be debated. Watersheds, after all, are scaleable, and political entities can debate even natural boundaries. We only need think of Colorado water rights disputes between southwestern states, tribal claims to water rights, or the larger question of nation-to-nation water rights highlighted by treaties and disputes between the United States and Mexico over the same Colorado river water ("International

Boundary"). In addition to political problems, there are the geographical problems of demarcating natural boundaries. Watersheds, after all, can be as small as a local creek, which might include a few dozen acres, or whole river systems. The Mississippi River, for example, drains two-fifths of the lower 48 United States (United States, "Mississippi River Facts," par 9.).

Two other terms provide a narrower view of a bioregion. Frank Golley, reviewing basic terms of environmental science, describes biome and ecotope. We can differentiate biomes from one another "by life forms of the dominant vegetation. Since the vegetation has gone through natural selection for the particular climatic and geological conditions of the biome, the vegetation is a suitable indicator of the biome" (62). Defined as such, biomes give us recognizable geographic regions like deserts, temperate forests, grasslands, etc. When we overlay this onto a particular landmass, like North America, smaller identifiable regions emerge: Pacific Northwest Forest and Subtropical forests. It might help to imagine biomes as ecosystems writ large. Much like political boundaries, Golley points out that these ecological boundaries are permeable and changeable. Rivers, for example, can cut through several biomes, transporting nutrients and sediment from an alpine biome to the ocean (becoming an example of where a watershed and one or more biomes overlap). Likewise, plants (via seed dispersal and pollination) and animals (because of migratory habits, seasonal vegetation patterns, or movement of prey species) move within and between biomes.

"At the smallest level of spatial scale," writes Golley,

> are those ecosystems in which we [humans] live, work and play. They occupy from tens to thousands of square meters and may consist of a lawn, a patch of forest among agricultural fields, a pond, or the south slope of the highest watershed on a mountain stream. Because these systems are small, we can interact intensely with them, observe them in great detail, dominate and convert them to our purpose. We call these fine-scale systems ecotopes. (90)

Golley goes on to refine the definition: "The ecotope is small enough that almost every property owner controls one ecotope and some control several or many.…Because we live and use ecotopes daily, we have an intuitive sense of how they are built and work" (90-91). In this last sentence, Golley moves from mere description to tacit persuasion. More specifically, however, such a sentence is also the moment where bioregionalist arguments and much of the writing we can label nature writing begin.

In the same way that Golley moves from descriptive rhetoric ("an ecotope is") to persuasive rhetoric (we interact regularly with specific ecotopes so must "have an intuitive sense of how they are built and work"), bioregionalist writers move from detailed descriptions of a particular place to arguments for broader understanding of that place to calls for readers to understand the places of which they are a part. One problem with such arguments is that they may not lead to understanding, but to isolation. If we only consider the particular ecotopes with which we interact regularly, we may forget about other, connected ecotopes and the biomes and other ecosystems to which we also belong. This is what Bill McKibben points to while discussing the dangers of self-sufficiency as part of a larger argument about developing a truly sustainable, regional community that connects humans to humans and to the biotic community ("Old

MacDonald"). This is much the same point Scott Russell Sanders makes in *Staying Put*: "I aspire to become an inhabitant," he writes, "one who knows and honors the land.…I am always driven by a single desire, that of learning to be at home" (xiii-xiv). Likewise, Wendell Berry argues for the pleasures of the near-at-hand in essays like "The Idea of a Local Economy" and throughout his work. These writers share Golley's assumption that it is beneficial and useful to know a particular place, a point that is part of Thoreau's experiment described in *Walden.* In fact, Lawrence Buell points out that from the beginnings of the term advocates for bioregionalism were concerned both with place and people (83), suggesting just the point Sanders makes in his introduction to *Staying Put*.

What's different, however, between traditional political boundaries and bioregional boundaries is intent. As practice and politics, bioregionalism offers this principle: "Our relation to the natural world takes place in a *place*, and it must be grounded in information and experience" (Snyder 39). To varying degrees, Golley, Snyder, Berry, McKibbon, and Sanders want to make the case that it is useful, beneficial, or fitting to live such a life. What, however, does "learning to be at home" really mean, and is such a process transferable between individuals or between ecotypes or biomes? It is with these questions that bioregionalism and rhetoric converge.

Richard Nelson examines not only what bioregionalism means but also the consequences of Sanders' "learning to be at home." Nelson identifies both with the specific ecotopes he inhabits daily and with the larger bioregion. In addition, his books and other writing are forms of social and political action, taking shape in the ways he negotiates, discusses, and translates his material presence through his particular rhetorical

choices. These choices develop often submerged and sometimes explicit argument for the importance of a deep understanding of place. Like Scott Russell Sanders' *Staying Put* or Gretel Ehrlich's *The Solace of Open Spaces*, Nelson's *The Island Within* blends characteristics of nature writing and travel writing to develop an argument that "acclaim[s] the rewards of exploring the place in which a person lives rather than searching afar" (xii). Distance and travel may offer rewards (particularly in his role as anthropologist), but Nelson rests his argument and centers his narrative on the value of proximity and of a long, deep presence in a specific place. An often-quoted passage from *The Island Within* communicates this point: "I undertook this work *not* as a travel guide, but as a guide to non-travel" (xii, emphasis added).

Material Presence and the Rhetoric of Presence

If one of bioregionalism's central concerns is demonstrating the importance of connecting to the natural communities of which we are a part, then it makes sense to examine bioregionalist texts for their use of the rhetoric of presence. Nelson's *The Island Within*—an account of his frequent trips to and travels on and around an island near his Sitka, Alaska home—offers an excellent case study for examining the uses and techniques of the rhetoric of presence. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this phrase—and related ones—appears in studies of performance art and video, museum exhibits, religion, and literary periods (most notable Modernism and the Renaissance). The rhetoric of presence has also been used to describe the style of at least one contemporary author of narrative nonfiction, Tom Wolfe. Recently, several critics have

also applied the phrase to travel writing. Katrina O'Loughlin, for example, uses the phrase to describe the ways that authors—in her case eighteenth century English women travelers—"writ[e] themselves in as a physical presence…to claim eyewitness authority for their observations" (420). Seen in this way, the rhetoric of presence becomes a collection of textual techniques an author can use to develop the ethos of veracity: the author did witness the events described within a particular narrative. As O'Loughlin points out, one reason women travelers sought ways to inhabit their narratives and "authorize" their travels was because of the proliferation of fictionalized travel narratives during the eighteenth century. As a result, many readers might suspect that these narratives were likewise fiction. Embodiment, through a rhetoric of presence, becomes a means of verification.

In her often-cited book *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt contrasts the phrase with what she calls "a rhetoric of illegitimate presence" (209). This formulation suggests that there can be rhetoric of legitimate presence or forms of language use that address, attack, or act as correctives to the "rhetoric of illegitimate presence." In *The Rhetoric of Empire* David Spurr details specific techniques that add up to Pratt's understanding of the "rhetoric of illegitimate presence." Additionally, Mimi Sheller discusses presence as it connects to "mastery of landscape" (52), which suggests both a potentially legitimate (or positive) presence and Pratt's "illegitimate presence." Such distinctions are important because what bioregionalists and writers like Nelson share is an argument that there can be a legitimate rhetoric of presence, one that articulates a likewise legitimate material presence. An ethically responsible or legitimate use of the rhetoric of presence would

exhibit at least some of the following qualities: A writer's expressed or implied sensitivity to the natural history of the places he or she describes, a writer's expressed or implied sensitivity to the cultures and cultural history of the people he or she describes, a writer's expressed or implied attentiveness to the ways in which his or her physical presence may alter the natural and cultural history of a place, and a writer's expressed or implied care in the way he or she represents biotic and abiotic elements of a place through language. This list is not exhaustive, but suggestive. By contrast, an ethically irresponsible or illegitimate use of the rhetoric of presence would either ignore such concerns or downplay their importance.

Nelson, an anthropologist by training, is well aware of the dangers Sheller, Pratt, and Spurr highlight as they describe various irresponsible uses of the rhetoric of presence. While *The Island Within* does not address these critics, it is clear that Nelson wants to avoid certain illegitimate actions and language. In fact, Nelson frames *The Island Within* with humility, which we could consider another quality of the ethically responsible use of the rhetoric of presence:

> Several years after I began spending time on the island, I felt increasingly frustrated that I knew so little and understood even less. Koyukon elders like Grandpa Williams and Sarah Stevens often spoke of how limited their knowledge was, although they had spent their entire lives studying the natural community of which they were a part. If this was true, how could I consider myself qualified to write a book about the island, with all the completeness and finality that implies? I have resolved the dilemma by regarding this [book] as a progress report. And as a reward for the many months of confinement that have gone into it, I can now return to the island and pick up the process where I left off. (xiii)

The opening sentence of this passage suggests modesty, an incompleteness of knowledge, and lack of mastery. The phrasing of deference and humility are a long way from language that suggests a "mastery of landscape" such as John Smith's description of the bounty of the Chesapeake. For Smith, "studying the natural community" means seeing it only as a potential commercial resource, and so he writes,

> The passage [north from Roanoke] is very shallow and dangerous by reason of the breadth of the sound and the little succour for a storme, but this teritory being 15. myle from the shoare, for pleasantnest of seate, for temporature of climate, fertility of soyle and comoditie of the Sea, besides beares, good woods, Saxefras, Walnuts &c. is not to be excelled by any other whatsoever. (11)

Even this short passage contains the hyperbole of Smith the salesman of the New World.

Nelson, by contrast, maintains his humility, acknowledging the Koyukon's local wisdom. He then goes beyond humility and deference by contrasting the way Koyukon elders speak of their incomplete knowledge even with their depth of physical presence in the landscape to his newcomer's even more acute inadequacy regarding knowledge of place. By framing *The Island Within* not as the ultimate word on a particular place but as a "progress report," Nelson further develops an ethos of modesty and humility. In the preface's final paragraph, Nelson underscores this humility by removing personal pronouns. "The mystery and complexity of an island.…That it defies all but the faintest comprehension—*even in a lifetime of intense, thoughtful experience*—is a fact worth celebrating. This book is offered as one *small* cheer in that celebration" (xiii, emphasis added). Here, Nelson's presence as writer is pushed to the background, and mastery of landscape becomes a near impossibility. This language frames a narrative of partial

knowledge; however, even this partial knowledge is grounded in experience. Nelson the writer must rely on the material presence of Nelson the person to provide the details of the progress report. The difference between this and an imperialist presence is that in Nelson's case presence is individual, tentative and temporary, measuring specific moments and events in time and place instead of marking the known—once and for all—from the unknown.

The Rhetoric of Presence and Nature Writing

Critics seeking to explain the characteristics of creative nonfiction also describe a version of the rhetoric of presence. Robert Root and Michael Steinberg, for instance, suggest the term "personal presence," which applies both to the creation of eyewitness authority mentioned by O'Loughlin *and* the way a "reader is taken on a journey into the mind and personality of the writer" (xxiv). Root and Steinberg's two-fold version of personal presence is useful because of the way it adds dimension to the idea of personal presence as well as the way, by extension, it explains the primary argument of Nelson's book and the collection of techniques he uses to create various kinds of presence.[5] Clearly, O'Louglin's version of presence and the first part of Root and Steinberg's definition sketch out one way writers connect to readers: establishing ethos by describing their physical presence (whether this is through richness of visual images or something more uncommon like kinesthetic details and description of somatic sufferings related to

[5] Root and Steinberg list four, additional "pronounced common elements": self-discovery and self-exploration, veracity, flexibility of form, and literary approaches to language (xxiv).

extremes of weather and climate) in a *particular* place at a *particular* time. This is equally true of nature and travel writers as it is of feature writers. It is, for example, the strategy William Langewiesche uses in *American Ground*. In the book, about the cleanup efforts at Ground Zero in New York City, Langewiesche describes himself as "like an archaeologist" (14) and relies on the language of exploration and adventure to coax readers into visualizing the scene and accepting his presence as both eyewitness and participant in the events.[6] Such language use—in Langewiesche's case the reliance on metaphors and images of exploration and mountaineering—helps make readers both understand and believe in the writer's material presence.

The second half of Root and Steinberg's personal presence, the manner in which a writer transports readers on an interior journey, can label a collection of techniques that includes reflection, asides, emotions, internal monologues, and even direct address to readers. This, too, is a form of materiality presence transformed into linguistic presence. It is what moments like Peter Matthiessen's "these journal" moments accomplish in *The Snow Leopard*, like his phrase, "these journals remind me of the date"(126). They call attention to another kind of presence. Readers are likely to understand such moments in a text not as after-the-fact reflection, but the views of a writer reflecting about events either as they happen or within the larger narrative of the book. Reading such words evokes immediacy, regardless of whether the passage was actually composed at the moment or

[6] For example, in one section of the book, Langewiesche describes Ground Zero: "The underground, beneath the pile, was a wilderness of ruins, a short walk from the city but as far removed from life there as any place can be" (18), and later, he describes the south projection stairwell: "For the first few weeks it had been choked with rubble, and had required careful negotiation, like a steep and unstable switchback trail" (21). In both passages, the once familiar is made deliberately exotic.

after the fact, in a hotel room or—even much later—in the comfort of a home office. This kind of immediacy, just like present-tense narration, leads to a sense of presence. Such moments create a bridge between the materiality of a writer in a particular place and the larger ideas of a writer's life—both before and after the particular moment described.

Presence and the Sublime

Before returning to Nelson's book, we must take one more detour and consider a potentially odd connection: Chris Anderson's consideration of Tom Wolfe's work. I bring Anderson's work up for two reasons. First, he has completed foundational work on literary nonfiction's "efforts to persuade us to attitudes, interpretations, opinions, and action" (2). In short, he reminds us that literary nonfiction is a rhetorical genre. Given the way that memoir and other forms of narrative nonfiction have become part of the public imagination in the twenty years since *Style as Argument*'s publication, it's also *kairotic* to examine recent work in light of Anderson's theory. The second reason to linger over Anderson's book also highlights the way he focuses on Wolfe's writing by analyzing the "rhetorical intensifications and strategies of presence" (4). Drawing on Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca's discussion of presence in *The New Rhetoric* and Longinus's *On the Sublime*, Anderson argues that Wolfe, "resort[s] to all the various strategies in the rhetorical repertoire for magnifying presence" because the experiences of the subjects he writes about (the Merry Pranksters, test pilots) outstrip language's ability to represent that subject (17-18). These strategies operate as "substitute[s] for strategies of proof or analysis" (32). While such strategies can capture sublime moments

(Sebastian Junger describing mega waves in *The Perfect Storm* or John Muir's near-peaceful account of swaying among storm-battered Sierra Nevada treetops in "A Wind Storm in the Forest"), it is likewise true that in a book like *The Island Within* such techniques need not describe only the sublime. Anderson's analysis, however, focuses on the stylistic sublime as he describes the following techniques: repetition, amplification, the union of figures for a common object, accumulating sentence structure, abrupt transitions, present tense narration, and—the most visible technique to anyone reading Wolfe's nonfiction for the first time—exclamations (18-22). These techniques are abundant in *The Island Within*. The most obvious and familiar of these techniques is present-tense narration, which Nelson maintains through most of the book. Comparing *The Island Within* to books like *The Right Stuff* and *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* reveals at least one rhetorical advantage Nelson has over Wolfe, who writes he "tried [in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*] not only to tell what the pranksters did but to re-create the mental atmosphere or subjective reality of it" (qtd. in Anderson 16). At several points, Anderson underscores Wolfe's rhetorical problem as reporter *and* observer, a concern Wolfe includes and describes within his book: he cannot ever know or accurately explain the experiences of his subjects. Unlike Wolfe, trying to articulate and make present the experiences of Kesey and his Merry Pranksters as an observer, Nelson bears witness to his own experience and this experience becomes a central presence in *The Island Within*. Put briefly, the narrative "I" and reflective, observational "I" are one person. Wolfe, by contrast, faces an impossible task. He "must push the outside of the envelope, [and] take language to its limits" (16). For Anderson, the end result of such attempts is this:

> We do not look completely past the language to its object. [Earlier Anderson describes this property of creative nonfiction as "translucent."] We experience style. The social and rhetorical significance of Wolfe is located here, in the act of reading. What Wolfe accomplishes for us is a stylistic transforming and ordering of realities that drive other writers to metadiscourse, irrealism, silence. That act of style itself, far from being purely mimetic, is a powerful argument for language at a time when language is being threatened by violence, unmeaning, and indifference. (47)

Wolfe's stylistic pyrotechnics become a way for readers to absorb and experience the sense of Wolfe as participant-observer. Anderson argues that the primary exigence for Wolfe's style in books like *The Right Stuff* is a double-disconnect: Wolfe is separated from his subjects' experience and from language's ability to describe the experience of these subjects. As a result language turns away from *mimesis* (in the sense that it recreates an observable, material reality) toward feeling, impression, and sensation.

Nelson's position as autodiegetic narrator keeps him from facing all the same rhetorical challenges that Wolfe faces. His background as cultural anthropologist suggests his awareness of the problems of being a participant-observer. Even so, Nelson must face the problem of every autobiographer: translating experiences into forms meaningful to readers. At times, Nelson's experiences are sublime, and his writing takes on a style indicating such sublimity, but his language also responds to other public and personal exigencies that account for the ways his style works to make his subjects present for readers. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest, "The simplest way of creating presence is by repetition" (144). While repetition is useful for objects an audience can see (like the phrase "look outside your window, and when you go to the window, you'll see

what I describe."), it's also useful for rhetorically recreating the presence of processes that cannot be seen wholly in time or space. Nelson writes:

> We relax for a while beside the mouth of Bear Creek, watching throngs of fish press in against the current, drawn and sustained by the transforming medium of *water*: *water* that fell in last week's rains…*water* that coursed through the views of Kluksa Mountain like nutrient-rich blood. *Water* that brings this tide of fish spilling back into the island, to replenish the land and sea. *Water* that conjoins ocean, atmosphere, and island *as one living community*. (226, emphasis added)

This repetition allows Nelson to extrapolate from the present moment, sitting at the mouth of the creek, to the larger-scale landscape and the unseen, but interconnected actions of an ecological process like the water cycle. While the passage provides vivid visual detail, it also provides one example of the way in which Nelson connects a specific visible moment to a larger, unseen ecological community. The final sentence indicates that while Nelson's island may be remote, it is not isolated, except in the strictly geographic sense of the term. Additionally—and perhaps more obvious for anyone who's spent time in the Pacific Northwest—Nelson uses repetition ("water" occurs five times within 79 words and he underscores this repetition, and its connection to living systems, by using the phrase "water that" three times) to suggest unseen connections between organic and inorganic, but the repetition also represents the Pacific Northwest's abundant annual rainfall.[7]

In the same chapter, Nelson uses repetition to call forth the wholly imagined presence of a god within the mountain. The passage begins with a question: "And what

[7] Records vary, but two sources indicate average annual rainfalls of nearly 100 inches: 96.07 (MSN Weather) inches and 86.13 inches (Intellicast).

god resides there?" This is followed by a series of responses. The passage also includes accumulating sentence structure, perhaps because Nelson is reaching for language to describe the indescribable in a way that doe*s* suggest sublimity. Nelson follows the short, five-word question with two longer sentences, each with their own embedded repetition: "The god who stands *humbled* in the mountain shadow, *humbled* at the edge, *humbled* beside grains of sand and shaking droplets. The god who *looks back* across creation and *looks back* as creation itself" (227, emphasis added). Nelson follows these sentences with a mammoth one, packed with nine verb phrases, cataloguing a series of increasingly active efforts:

> The god who sees through every eye, cries out from the beak of ravens, surges in the mountain's veins, touches midnight burrows with shivering whiskers, streams down from shattered storm clouds, drinks rain from the rivers, hides behind thunderheads, hunts on hushed wings at dusk, bursts out in blinding glory above the peaks at sunrise. (227)

Even amplification exists in the passage, as activity moves from observation to interaction to action. Longinus describes how amplification "lend[s] strength to the argument by dwelling upon it" (qtd. in Anderson 19). In the passage above Nelson draws on Longinian use of style to suggest the sublime power and reach of an indwelling mountain god whose presence is felt and experienced, but still remains unseen. Rhetorically, this god is a synecdochic placeholder for both the biotic and the abiotic parts of the island. Nelson's mountain god, then, is both a figure of reverence and—as a substitute term for the island—a rhetorical figure. And when Nelson pulls back to examine the island as a whole, his language indicates to readers that the only way to

understand the island's power is by examining the connection between parts, because "[t]here is far too much, and the distance is too vast. I've left everything of myself there, and brought everything I am away. I stare down at my own hand, trembling in the twilight, open it, and find a mountain inside" (227). While earlier passages suggest that the unseen power of the mountain god can be accessed only through describing individual actions, this passage suggests that even these comparisons are inadequate to describe what being on and seeing the island is *really* like. Even as narrator of his own experiences, Nelson comes to the realization that Wolfe does: language alone may be inadequate for describing such experiences because of quantity ("too much") and distance ("too vast"). Both phrases suggest the sublime. Furthermore, we cannot see the connections directly. Only language can call them forth.

In the next sentence, Nelson extends the failure of language to a doubled sense of personal existence. While it may be another way for Nelson to suggest that he cannot know the island as a whole or transmit this experience into language, it is more likely an expression of presence's importance. Like Wolfe's prose, this passage suggests that the feeling and sense of an immediate moment is the only valid experience. Read this way the "distance" Nelson describes indicates regret. Distance here equals absence and disconnection. Instead of leaving readers with a sense of absence and sadness, Nelson reconciles absence and presence. He does this *not* with literal description but with metaphoric flourish. Nelson describes his hand (connected to his body and to the rest of the world) as like the mountain, part of the island and connected to the sky and water, biotic and abiotic, around it.

Nelson also uses cataloguing to speculate about processes that lead to what he witnesses. In one instance, he comes across a dead sperm whale on the beach: "It takes no imagination to see how the whale died. Near the base of its lower jaw is a snarl of bright green trawl net" (121). Such phrasing offers an example of the rhetoric of presence (Nelson writing in the present) and suggests—with the use of "see"—the oral discourse of the courtroom. To borrow Nelson's phrasing, it takes no imagination to see a lawyer for the Natural Resources Defense Counsel using that same phrase as she points to photographs of turtle "by catch" from longline fishing. The phrase draws readers in with an initial visual image. "See" becomes both a marker of visual description and a deictic cue, pointing readers or audience to the evidence. Nelson follows this description by filling in the facts, moving from physically verifiable details to informed speculation: "*Apparently* the whale swam into it and a large opening in the web encircled its jaw, snaring on its teeth, then wedging down so tightly it cut through the flesh and muscle to the bone deep inside" (121, emphasis added). The paragraph then moves further into imagined action, which Nelson signals with "I think of," and ends with a catalog of verb phrases describing the whale's movement from "the whale struggling" to "the animal weakening until it could no longer feed, swimming slowly and without direction, then finally, after days or weeks, rolling over and sucking down water with its last breaths" (121). The catalog of active verbs and the *homoioteleuton* achieved through use of present participles create presence by allowing readers to visualize,[8] as if watching a

[8] *Homoioteleuton* is a kind of parallelism. Silva Rhetoricae describes it as the "[s]imilarity of endings of adjacent or parallel words."

documentary, the movement from the whale getting caught in the net to its eventual death. The scene develops the whale's presence when Nelson moves from using "the whale" in the beginning to a more distanced "the animal" near the end.

After recounting the whale's death, Nelson transitions from the active and imagined past into the narrative, but reflective present as a means to link the presence of seen with the presence of the unseen:

> Similar chunks of net—ranging from shreds a few feet long to thick ravels that would straighten out to a hundred yards—frequently wash onto the island's shore. I've often looked at these tangles and wondered how many fish, how many birds, how many seals, how many porpoises they might have killed since they were pitched over the side. But I never imagined *this*. (121, author's emphasis)

Here, Nelson reflects in the narrative present about things he has personally witnessed (the fishing nets) in the *past* and speculates on the deaths caused by them. While this moment reflects on his previous experience walking the edge of the island, the repetition as well as the mounting list of species suggests the ongoing scale of death. As a final means of making present the scale of death, Nelson ends the paragraph with the deictic "this," which brings together past experience, reflection, and present-tense description. Not only does his use of "this" bring the past forward into the present, but it also calls forth immediate experience (Nelson standing by the whale) for readers, closing the gaps in time and space because *deixis* in this case points outside the book to the narrative present. As readers, we stand with Nelson watching the whale, and the effect of his reflections and past observation is that we share—for the moment—his memories. It is moments like these that Nelson uses more often than more overt rhetorical moves like

‘Seeing the whale, I was horrified that humans were the cause of such needless death.’

Accumulated Presence

While Anderson’s discussion of the rhetoric of presence in Wolfe’s writing provides a basis for analyzing the work of other writers, *The Island Within* exhibits uses of presence that Anderson does not address. We could label one category of these techniques accumulated presences, because they only becomes important after we have read accumulated details contained within several chapters. In these cases, presence is not the direct result of the techniques that Nelson uses, but results from the persuasiveness of a material, physical presence (or attendant physical signs of such presence). This is most evident in the case of bears. Throughout the book, Nelson notes the danger of an actual bear encounter, not because he sees them (although at one point he does), but because of two kinds of signs: those made and left by the bears (scat, tracks, claw marks) and those that indicate a change of seasons. In one passage that illustrates the former, Nelson walks on the beach with his dog, Shungnak: “Not far away, we find a set of tracks pressed into the sand below the morning’s high tide mark.” Nelson continues, “The imprint is sharp-sided and crisp; not one glistening grain of sand had dried or fallen. And *I know* the splayed paw that made this track is making another *at this moment*, somewhere close by” (62, emphasis added). It is not the sight of an actual bear that troubles Nelson. What worries him is the presence and newness of the bear tracks, which he reads as a sign of immediacy. The bear that made the tracks must be “somewhere close by.” This felt sense of presence in *The Island Within* is not unlike the presence of the snow leopard in Peter

Matthiessen's book of the same name. At one point Matthiessen writes, "though the sign is probably a week old, we are already scanning the sunny ledges and open caves on both sides of the river that we have studied for so many days in vain" (221). Later in the book, he writes, "Last night, the snow leopard left tracks just outside the monastery…it is hard not to read this as a sign" (253). Both instances—like the moment when Nelson spots bear tracks—rely on material evidence as signs that the snow leopard is a real, not imagined, presence. Deer, creatures Nelson sees many times throughout the book take on this same accumulated presence in the book. The island, the surrounding Southeastern Alaska weather, the water and ocean, and Nelson's home also manifest as both seen and felt, accumulated presences.

It is also easy to catalogue instances of other, more specialized instances of the rhetoric of presence which we can label the presence of place (a form of *enargeia* or—more specifically—*topographia*), presence of people (which we might label *anthropographia*), presence of civilization (an alternate or collective form of *anthropographia*), and even the presence of thought or reflection. This last figure indicates moments in a text when the author/narrator re-visits a location and reflects on the previous experiences in this place.

Nature Writing's Rhetorical Tradition

There are, of course, other ways to classify the rhetorical patterns of *The Island Within*. We can fit the book into Thomas Lyon's taxonomy of nature writing and identify it as an

example of what Randall Roorda calls "narratives of retreat" or "dramas of solitude."[9] In fact, Lyon includes *The Island Within* as an example within his taxonomy. He lists the book under "Rambles," a group including Annie Dillard's canonical *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* and Terry Tempest Williams' often-cited *Refuge: A Unnatural History of Family and Place*. Lyon places this category near the middle of his taxonomy's spectrum, which includes professional papers and field guides (like Roger Tory Peterson's *A Field Guide to Western Birds*), works that highlight "natural history information" on one end (20), and "analytic and comprehensive works on humans and nature" on the other end. "In these [latter] works," Lyon writes, "interpretation predominates" (25). He suggests Bill McKibbon's *The End of Nature* as one example, but we might also list portions of Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* or Jennifer Price's *Flight Maps* as works that deal primarily with the "philosophical interpretation of nature" (20). Such works are primarily arguments that step back from immediate experience. Lyon's taxonomy provides for another term not represented by the poles: "personal response to nature" or natural experience (20). We might think of this third trait in Lyon's definition as connected to the second part of Root and Steinberg's "personal presence" or what I call presence of person. This is exemplified in *The Snow Leopard* by Matthiessen's announced journal entries or in *The Island Within* by the passage where, after describing fallen, paired trees, Nelson writes, "I wonder about the deeper dimension of their partnership, whether each

[9] In Roorda's book, *Dramas of Solitude*, one of the central questions is "What can it mean to turn away from other people, to evade all sign of them for purposes that exclude them by design, then turn back toward them in writing, reporting upon, accounting for, even recommending to them the condition of their absence?" (xiii)

tree has a sense of the other. And is there a community among all of these neighboring trees, one that could be comprehended from a human or animal perspective?" (13) Here, Nelson the individual has stepped out of his present-as-witness-to-nature role and moved into a reflective role. We might also think of Nelson's book as narrative ethic, a point suggested by H. Lewis Ulman in his reading of "the Gifts," a version of *The Island Within*'s final chapter. Narrative ethics demonstrate or enact moral choices or moral processes instead of offering abstract principles or more straightforward, overt arguments. Recently, there has been a call in environmental philosophy for scholars to pay increased attention to narrative ethics.[10]

In addition to these connections, Lawrence Buell and Dan Philippon also begin recent books with discussions of nature writing. In *The Environmental Imagination*, Buell offers four criteria that define "an environmentally oriented work." His first is that "[t]he nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history" (7). Next, he offers a pair of criteria connected to ethics: "human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest" and "[h]uman accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation" (7). Finally, Buell suggests these works provide "[s]ome sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given" even if such a sense is only understood (8). It is notable that Buell's examples cross genres. He lists novels by Dickens and James Fenimore Cooper and poems by Percy Shelly and Wordsworth

[10] Including a 2003 special issue of *Ethics & the Environment* on environmental narrative edited by Deborah Slicer.

alongside the central author of his study, Thoreau. Buell's rationale for naming only four criteria is "to give a flavor of how potentially inclusive *and* exclusive the category of 'environmental' is, in my apprehension of it. By these criteria, few works fail to qualify at least marginally, but few qualify unequivocally *and* consistently" (8, author's emphasis). Why, then, focus a study on nonfiction nature writing, or take an even narrower path, as Buell does, by focusing on the work of Thoreau? Buell's first answer is pragmatic. While nearly any novel or poem may exhibit a particular element, "Most of the clearest cases are so-called nonfictional works" (8). There's nothing mutually exclusive about a combination of Lyon's three-characteristic taxonomy of nature writing (which we might shorten to three words: describe, reflect, interpret) with Buell's four criteria.[11] It is, however, worthwhile to distinguish between the two systems and highlight points where they overlap.

To borrow from biology, Lyon seems more interested in describing the morphology of particular kinds of nature writing. With only three named characteristics, he is able to define seven distinct sub-types of nature writing (field guides and professional papers, natural history essays, rambles, solitude and backcountry living, travel and adventure, farm life, and man's role in nature). Extending the simple comparison, Lyon's system resembles the way comparative biologists distinguish between different species of mammals. His system is most useful not because he provides the best or richest definition, but because the taxonomy provides critics, teachers, and

[11] We could also answer the question why nonfiction environmental texts by remembering Chris Anderson's point about how creative nonfiction has taken over the moral work of the novel in its "efforts to persuade us to attitudes, interpretations, opinions, and action" (2).

students of writing a way in to the writing. It offers some way to distinguish—in broad brush strokes—the general rhetorical patterns that allow us to differentiate one type of nature writing from another. While we might see the criteria as simply a genre-specific version of identifying developmental modes, Lyon's list of nature writing sub-genres—as well as his discussion of them—has more to do with audience and rhetorical purpose than with describing broad developmental strategies. Each of the subtypes Lyon mentions describes texts with a shared purpose. For instance, he describes the group of texts clustered around solitude and backcountry living, using the example of Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*, as "critical and radical" (25). Works within this subgenre offer more than a reflection of and on the larger culture the author has stepped away from. In Abbey's case, this added element is an acerbic call to action.

Recalling classical categories of rhetoric, we can identify many works of solitude and backcountry living as *doubly* epideictic. First, they demonstrate the material and moral failings of the mainstream society. Second, such works praise alternative visions of culture. And while we might place it near the 'philosophical' pole of Lyon's taxonomy—or even under the 'farm life' subgenre—it's also easy to think of Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America* as another example of this subgenre. One doubly epideictic passage occurs in Berry's opening chapter. He writes, "This gluttonous enterprise of ugliness, waste, and fraud thrives in the disastrous breach it has helped to make between our bodies and our souls. As a people, we have lost sight of the profound communion—even the union—of the inner with the outer" (11). Overall, Berry's book is more essay-based argument than the narrative-based *Desert Solitaire*, but passages like

the one above suggest the books share an epideictic impulse. Moments like this highlight the shortcomings of Lyon's taxonomy. Three categories fail to provide enough range to easily distinguish related, but separate rhetorical forms. These problem cases, however, also suggest how a particular work might borrow from several subgenres depending on the primary purpose or dominant exigence. If this is the case, then the most useful part of Lyon's taxonomy is not his list of subgenres but his three dimensions: natural history information, personal response to nature, and philosophical interpretation of nature.

Returning to the biological metaphor, we might compare Lyon's categories to a taxonomic system that offers a way to distinguish between different kinds of mammals, while Buell's criteria relate to a system that offers a way to distinguish between mammals and other kinds of animals. Put another way, Lyon's taxonomy provides focus, while Buell's criteria provide scope, a way to compare all forms of environmental writing—which already offers a broader definition than nature writing—from other kinds of writing. Lyon concentrates on describing broad characteristics of nature writing; Buell concentrates on the cultural, literary, academic, and natural contexts of environmental writing, suggesting that all texts, but environmental literature in particular, speak to, are informed by, and help create the environments of which they are a part. What separates this from other contextual criticism is the move beyond culture and cultural influence. Buell offers an approach that allows us to consider the ways in which texts engage the material world on its own terms as well as the ways in which texts take up ethical concerns regarding the rights and standing of the non-human world. Examining the two sets of criteria, we can see that much like species, genus, family, and order nest within

class, Lyon's definition of nature writing—and his details of the taxonomic differences between the particular sub-types of nature writing—nest within Buell's understanding of environmental writing.

Nature Writer as Witness

This distinction between nature writing and environmental literature is generally helpful because it provides a starting point for articulating the interests and exigencies that give rise to a mouthful of a genre name: nonfiction narrative environmental literature. This awkward term will likely never catch on, but I use it here because the phrase focuses our attention on what distinguishes this writing from other forms of creative nonfiction. The term is of particular interest to this study—and more specifically the discussion of Richard Nelson's writing—because of the ways it and the descriptive systems outlined by Lyon and Buell address issues of presence. Earlier, I mentioned the way that Lyon's middle term, "personal response to nature" (20), connects to presence of person, the author writing him- or herself into a scene in the manner O'Loughlin describes (420). Writers include after-the-fact and as-it-happens reflection as supplemental ways to bear witness. Such moments add to the *enargeia* of present-tense narration. After describing a particular stretch of beach on his unnamed island, Nelson pulls back to suggest both another way of seeing what he has described and to suggest the role of the individual within a particular landscape:

> But looking down the beach, I realize that despite the changes wrought by this storm, someone could easily walk this shore without being aware that anything unusual has happened. The land

> seems timeless, inert, stable, and permanent. Most of the storm's effects would only be evident to *someone very familiar with this place* (118-9, emphasis added).

Yes, the passage works as reflection, a way to measure the scenes of this chapter and the book, but it also suggests the importance of the extended physical presence of an eyewitness to the changes of specific place. Implicit in the last sentence is an argument about the importance of such witness. For Nelson, it is not enough to be present and describe the magic and wonder—at times mundane, and at times sublime—of this beach. In addition to this, it is important that someone knows and chronicles the changes that take place. In this way, 'familiar' comes to mean familiar because one is physically present and materially aware enough to know the beach and notice the changes. This call for the meaning and importance of presence is just one instance of how Nelson shares an outlook with other bioregional writers. In moments like these, the book does not offer a substitute for material presence. Instead Nelson, Berry, Ray, Lopez and others argue that texts cannot replace the familiarity of material presence. Reading the land and knowing its signs are what matter.

Nelson's book is not simply give-and-take between observation and reflection, the descriptions of a particular place followed by acknowledgement of the writer as a figure on the ground of this place. Such back-and-forth development is common in nearly all narrative fiction and nonfiction. The book is also not, exclusively, an argument—like Wordsworth's "The Tables Turned"—against book-based learning. What distinguishes the moments of back-and-forth in *The Island Within* from a similar organizational pattern in other books is the centrality of presence. Presence is an integral part of nature writing

in particular and environmental writing (which certainly includes some types of travel writing) more generally. Adding the reflective, writerly moments of Nelson's book to the first of Buell's points, the distinction begins to take shape. Nelson describes beaches, islands, bears, trees, oceans, rain, and deer as "present not merely as framing device[s] but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history" (7). In fact, one part of Nelson's rhetoric of presence is the ongoing embodiment of the island and comparisons between the island and other living beings in passages like this:

> I stop the engine and we drift in the quiet, relaxed now, our attention wholly focused on being here, surrounded by the island's bedrock, as if the earth has turned inside out to contain us. Moments like this bring on a feeling of intimacy and elation, the closeness of being encompassed by something greater than myself—inside a forest, inside a cloud, inside a mountain, inside a breaking wave…inside the island (125).

The first sentence uses a metaphoric relationship between the actual and the imagined to describe the experience brought on by the way that Nelson and his son, Ethan, maintain attention to their present, material circumstances. A secondary, unstated comparison is to a person's embrace. The island holds them as one person might hold another. The second sentence, however, relies on a comparison between this particular experience and others Nelson has already described or will describe in the book. It offers a subtle example of the rhetoric of presence. The emphasis is on actual, material experience. One can really be inside and embraced by forests, clouds (think of walking or driving in fog), waves, and collectively, an island. The relationship described here is a physical one, related to scale and ecology (in both in a tactile and physical sense). It is real experience like the one

above that results in the conditions of "intimacy and elation." Unlike previous passages, this one describing a "quiet" moment provides an example of how description and reflection condense and merge, a strategy that results in increased immediacy and sense of presence. Description and reflection on nature both occur within the first sentence, bringing the reflection into the narrative present. By contrast, the deictic "this" of the second sentence draws our attention to the present. Nelson's use of parallelism ("inside a forest, inside a cloud, inside a mountain") also focuses readers' attention on the physical world he describes.

Another recurrent comparison is of loving the island—and portions of the island's nonhuman nature—like a person. Near the end of an extended reflective passage, Nelson offers this comparison: "There is great risk in loving a wild place, knowing it can easily be swept away. It seems little different from loving a person—the profound and tender pleasures, mingled with a fear of loss" (208). Coming after moments in the book that describe mid-island clear cuts and a storm-altered beach, a passage like this suggests that both are capable of such damage; however, Nelson does not let readers linger on the ambiguity:

> Not far from here, I've seen entire islands subjugated and hollowed out, left with shattered remnants of the life they once held. There is such sadness in these places, even for one who never saw them whole. The silence of their ruined landscapes is like the weeping of the dead. (208)

The first sentence speaks to the past, pushing readers to conclude that it is commercial human interests that are the most risk to these islands. As when describing commercial fishing, Nelson's word choice in this passage ("subjugated," "hollowed out," shattered,"

and "ruined") makes it clear how he feels—and how he wants readers to feel—about clear cutting the island's forests. In addition, his use of "like" in the last sentence keeps the comparison from collapsing into personification. We are asked to identify with absence in the landscape by connecting it to human suffering. Even so, the human suffering that Nelson suggests is also a form of absence, because it is not those mourning the dead but the dead themselves who are weeping. This suggests another level of linkage between human and nonhuman. If the earlier passage where Nelson describes the post-storm beach suggests the last of Buell's criteria, this passage suggests most clearly both Nelson's rhetorical motives and the ways in which *The Island Within* contains Buell's first three criteria. In passages like these, one of Nelson's recurrent points comes through: humans have obligations to nonhuman nature. In the case above, he achieves this point by way of negative example: if clearcutting creates "ruined landscapes," then we should mourn their loss and, Nelson implies, do something to save remaining wild places. He makes the point more directly in an interview: "We don't have a deer problem, we have a people problem" (Devlin). For Nelson, humans are equally to blame for the subjugation of forests and for deer overpopulation.

But Nelson doesn't deal exclusively with human-nature relationships and the ethical implications of anthropogenic environmental changes. He also has moments that connect human-to-human relationships through a discussion of presence as compared to absence (both natural and textually-created), and highlight the ways in which these kinds of presence can have textual consequences. As Randall Roorda suggests:

> One condition of nature writing as involving retreat is that human presence or companionship, while not ruled out, is either incidental, beside the point; or it is put at issue, figured as an element or an impediment in the narrative line. The latter approach, tracking the withdrawal from human presence, is important to *Walden.*…The former approach, which as nearly as possible renders human company invisible, informs the sort of attention paid in many 'rambles' (which are seldom through wilderness) and wilderness trips (which are seldom undertaken alone). (5)

In some parts of *The Island Within*, Nelson does consider the presence of other humans, but it comes by way of a reversal Roorda does not discuss. Far from the presence of other humans being incidental, *The Island Within* offers moments that underscore the continued importance of the presence of other humans:

> Nita leans against a driftwood log, tracing aimless lines in the sand, firelight flickering on her face. I wonder about her thoughts, about the unspoken questions and fears and frustrations that rest inside her. Perhaps she's worried about the recent news that her mother has some undiagnosed illness. Or perhaps she feels alone when we come to the island together, just as I feel alone when I'm here by myself. (129)

This passage offers at-the-moment reflection. Nelson chooses to frame the reflection as a moment within the scene he's describing. Both the specific details of the scene and Nelson's reflection unfold in present tense. While such present-tense narration only simulates at-the-moment action, it does increase both readerly immediacy and the rhetorical effect of presence. Even more than the narrated scene, Nelson's use of present-tense reflection heightens immediacy by seeming (whether such reflection happened at the moment or not) to take place along with the action.

Likewise, the human company is visible, physically present, but the troubled relationship Nelson articulates occurs in the way that he wonders if his partner feels alone in their presence together on the island. This is the type of relationship that Roorda describes. For Nelson, the problem of presence in *The Island Within* is actually a problem of absence. Companionship on the island, with other humans (his partner, his son, his friend) or with animals, like his dog Shungnak, isn't viewed as a problem to dismiss or to write out of the book's record of events. Instead, what Nelson offers in the passage's final sentence is a footnote to such moments of companionship. Here, nature and culture are linked, and for Nelson solitude in nature is valuable, but it is not to be valued to the exclusion of human companionship. Family bonds and sharing such a place with loved ones and friends are as important as experiencing the island alone. Moments like the one above offer Nelson's own minor-key repudiation of the 'romantic thesis.' At *this* moment, he's happy to have his partner with him, and such happiness makes Nelson consider the times he spends alone on the island. Unlike the situations within Thoreau's *Walden* that Roorda mentions, Nelson's solitude, his retreat, includes a longing for the family he's separated from.

Social and Political Action in Nelson's Nature

While Nelson's family and friends appear throughout *The Island Within*, neither the book nor the places he describes are culturally isolated. Nelson's text may not offer as direct an indictment of American attitudes and actions as a book like Berry's *The Unsettling of America* or McKibbon's *The End of Nature*. Nor, of course, does a book like *The Island*

Within present the same kind of rhetorical urgency of direct mail or email campaigns by organizations like Natural Resources Defense Council or the National Parks Conservation Association. Even so, it's clear both from large-scale patterns (like the way he uses the preface) and sentence-level choices (like the careful use of adjectives and verb phrases that guide reader interpretation in otherwise descriptive moments) that the book addresses what Nelson sees as a cultural crisis. Nelson suggests that humans put too much actual and conceptual distance between ourselves and the nature of which we are a part.

At least two contemporary critics provide useful background for considering the connection between *The Island Within* and its cultural and social contexts. In Dan Philippon's case, this comes through his book, *Conserving Words: How American Nature Writers Shaped the Environmental Movement.* While Nelson offers an implicit argument instead of an overt denial of the 'romantic thesis,' Philippon addresses the problem outright. "This thesis has two major faults: it depends upon the notion that aesthetic discourse has no social function, and it neglects the many ways in which nature writers have engaged both history and society" (24). Moments of expressive, romantic-style rapture and sublimity exist in *The Island Within*, but Nelson's text clearly exhibits a social function. Moreover, the romantic moments connect to and are part of the book's social function. The vivid scenes we read of Nelson's island (boating, fishing, and surfing its waters; exploring its beaches, hiking its trails, making use of previously built human structures; describing the signs, presence, and types of animal and plant inhabitants; and detailing the effects of logging practices like road building and clear cutting on the island), more often aesthetic than outright argumentative, add up to the "progress report"

he mentions in his preface. It is relatively simple to suggest that Nelson's book, too, when compared to other examples of the genre, *does have* a social function, and this social function is both descriptive and prescriptive.

One notable mid-twentieth century example of nature writing exhibiting a social function is Marjory Stoneman Douglas' *Everglades: River of Grass*. While the original version, published in 1947, was more cultural and natural history of the Everglades and less argument for preservation, the book also served as the nexus of Douglas' larger efforts to generate understanding of the Everglades' value and work toward their preservation. In this respect, focusing on description instead of overt argument, the book is more like Rachel Carson's early work, *The Sea Around Us,* than her later book, *Silent Spring*. The final chapter of Douglas' book, "The Eleventh Hour," offers prescriptive measures to save the Everglades and a growing list of consequences of inaction, and a later edition added overt calls to action, but like *The Sea Around Us, Everglades: River of Grass* primarily offers description. A contemporary example, Janisse Ray's 2000 book, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, offers a closer parallel to the way Nelson structures his book, blending cultural history, natural history, and personal narrative in ways that are more obviously and thoroughly prescriptive. We can link *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, like Nelson's book, to bioregionalism and the connection of individuals or groups to particular places. Ray makes this case near the end of her introduction: "The memory of what [landscape my ancestors] entered is scrawled on my bones, so that I carry the landscape like an ache. The story of who I am cannot be severed from the story of the flatwood" (4). Ray frames her book as memoir, focusing our attention on the past.

By contrast, *The Island Within* provides a record of the island at the moment of Nelson's visits—focusing attention on the ever-changing present—and offers observations that extend what he's learned during his time on the island to other parts of his life and our lives. Even with these structural differences, both books develop arguments that are based on rich description of very specific environments.

Ray's book is more overt in the way it moves from aesthetic description as implied argument to overt argument and direct engagement with readers. The afterword, for example, relies on repeated use of the first-person plural pronoun and uses such phrasing as "fighting again" and "new rebellion" (272). Following the afterword is a one-page narrative of hope, "There Is a Miracle for You if You Keep Holding On," a three-generations-in-the-future view of the recovery of the longleaf pine community. After this, she provides appendices that catalog recently extinct species, endangered species, and species proposed for endangered status. A final section provides an extensive list—formatted address style—of organizations and other sources of information on longleaf pine forests. The total effect of these final chapters and appendices is to offer an explicit engagement with readers and the larger society. Ray moves from her description of the "new rebellion" to a narrative of hope for the future, to a catalogue of what has been or will be lost, to a letter-, email-, and phone- friendly list of 'next step' actions. Ray's text seems a tailor-made repudiation of the romantic thesis.

Nelson does not go to Ray's lengths. In fact, the language of Nelson's epilogue is more personal and less direct than the language of *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*. He offers a list of resources, but presents them not as a direct call for action in the way that

Ray does. Instead, much like his epilogue, Nelson's list is more personal, offering "books that have been especially important to me as sources of inspiration, information, and perspective during these island years" (281). The list certainly provides further reading, but its format—that of a bibliography or works cited—emphasizes the works themselves and not a direct social purpose. As readers, we might seek out and read some of the books, but any call to action that's asked or required of us is secondary to the importance the books have for Nelson. This is not to say that *The Island Within* is more concerned with description and reflection and less concerned with larger social or issues. In addition to being an example of an aesthetic work that has social dimension, the book is also a text that, in Philippon's words, "engage[s] both history and society" (24). In one example of such engagement, from the chapter "A Frenzy of Fish," Nelson describes fishing from his small boat as well as the work of commercial fisherman. Poetic, evocative detail is used for both activities. However, after describing the "elegant simplicity" of the boats working in the bay, Nelson changes descriptive direction and rhetorical stance:

> But the human dimensions of this scene are vast and complex—the intricacies of research and management, international economics, biological politics, and high personal stakes for the fisherman. The season's predetermined quota is about five thousand tons of herring, worth over six million dollars to the captains and the crew. It's a primal endeavor of people at work in nature, set incongruously within the context of big business. (71)

Here, Nelson as present-tense autodiegetic narrator, looking for the best way to describe his experience on the bay, disappears to be replaced by Nelson as at-the-moment anthropologist. Maintaining present-tense narration, Nelson pulls back from his

immediate situation to take in both "this scene" and its social context. This simultaneous present and distant perspective allows him to maintain focus on the scene itself—with him as part of the scene—and step back to consider the connections between the very specific activity and the matrix of "human dimensions" of which the scene is a part. Additionally, the social dimension gets balanced between the roles of individuals ("fishermen," "captains," "crew," and "people") and the roles of social institutions ("management," "economics," "politics," and "big business"). Like his descriptions of specific animals on and around the island, Nelson frames this picture of individual people on specific boats as part of an ecology. The passage works against the idyllic alone-in-the-wilderness narrative of Romantic nature or the nature-spoiled-by-technology view of Naturalist novels like those that Leo Marx explores. Instead, Nelson presents a view of human action embedded within an existing, reasonably objective, social reality. And while this particular passage engages the social dimension of a small group of "seiners, skiffs, and tenders" as well as the individuals who work on them, it also looks to the past and to the future. The final sentence does not idealize the work, but reminds readers of a time in human history when the primary exigency for fishing (and others kinds of "work in nature") was a satisfaction of basic (human) animal needs. Nelson's use of "primal" suggests a pre-modern, noncommercial moment in history, which allows him —for the moment—to lump all human cultures together instead of making distinctions between developed and developing countries or consumer and subsistence cultures within a contemporary context. Buried under the surface, however, is the connection between this primal work and an individual exigency for Nelson: providing food for his family. This

links to another implied comparison: the connection between "the context of big business" for this group of fishing boats and a similar context of big business (in this case industrial, transnational agriculture and silvaculture) surrounding Nelson's pursuits on the island. Nelson hunts and fishes to sustain his family; he and his partner grow their own produce, adding local soil amendments like "seaweed and kitchen scraps" (196). If all this suggests the past, then the "quotas" necessitated by current scarcity of commercial resources suggest two possible futures: one with viable fisheries and the other (without quotas) of depleted or exhausted fisheries. In passages like this, even a casual reader will see the underlying concerns in *The Island Within* and Nelson's sense that individuals should be grounded in and aware of place, culture, and history.

The Value of Islands

In the final chapter of *Conserving Words*, "The Island as Metaphor," Philippon offers a short discussion of *The Island Within*, providing his own examples to suggest that Nelson moves past merely reinforcing the "romantic thesis." He also reminds us that the metaphors we use for nature act as filters, because of the "narratives those metaphors enable" and the manner in which the metaphors "hide" other ways of knowing and experiencing the material world (269-70). While Philippon's review of how we use metaphor as a means to understand the world around us provides a helpful reminder, it is his list of follow-up questions that's even more helpful for analyzing the rhetorical effectiveness of a metaphor connected to nature:

> [D]oes the narrative [the metaphor] enables make sense? [D]oes it correspond to what we know about the world through personal experience and scientific investigation? [D]oes it work well in practice? [D]oes it promote environmental health and environmental justice? [D]oes it cultivate relationships of care? [D]oes it allow for individual freedom? [D]oes it foster an attitude of respect? (270)

Such questions are helpful, because not only do they help us examine and understand our use of particular metaphors, but they also provide a set of guidelines for determining the veracity and effectiveness of a particular work of nature writing. Additionally, they are a means by which we can account for the ways that the language of a particular text is informed by or influences the cultural and natural environments of which it is a part.

While these questions occur within Philippon's discussion of island as metaphor and the ways that writers like Nelson use this particular metaphor in their writing, Philippon's book is useful for ongoing and future analysis of Nelson's writing for several other reasons. First, his introduction brings Carolyn Miller's view of genre into contact with his discussion of nature writing and various U.S.-based environmental organizations. For Philippon, Miller's understanding of genre as social action is valuable because it highlights how various forms of nature writing are both responsive to and constructive of material and social conditions. A constructivist approach to nature writing is useful because, as Philippon writes, "[i]t urges us to move beyond a limited definition of the genre as first-person, nonfiction essays [in the way that [Thomas] Lyon's still-useful taxonomy does] in favor of an analysis of readers and writers who function in history—a history that includes even these writers' seemingly 'extraliterary' efforts at environmental reform" (10). This suggests a general, rhetorical approach to our analysis

of both literary *and* transactional texts (to use Root and Steinberg's term).[12] Philippon's understanding of the genres of nature writing also suggests that we need to move beyond simply describing nature writing's internal features (as Lyon's taxonomy does) to examine the cultural work that these texts perform and the exigencies prompting this work. In Nelson's case, this means considering his career as an anthropologist and his own discussion of the move from descriptive to literary prose even before writing *The Island Within*. It also means looking at texts like Nelson's *Heart and Blood*, which has literary moments, but might best be described as a combination of book-length journalism and cultural anthropology. And such an approach clearly means examining *The Island Within* for the way that it responds to and may inform various conversations between readers and writers as well as writers and other writers. Finally, it means looking at Nelson's work as environmental activist and the ways that this work might seek to engage other audiences or engage more time-sensitive exigencies.

Despite the limitations of various definitions, Philippon argues "'nature writing' is useful because it calls attention to the two principle subjects with which genre is concerned: the definition of 'nature' and the problem of language" (11). His answer to the first half of the statement is this: "To be human is to be as much an inhabitant of culture as an inhabitant of nature. We are both *apart* from external "nature' and *a part of* universal 'nature'" (13, author's emphasis). Seen this way, nature is both something we can observe—stand outside of, and comment on—and something of which we are a part.

[12] In their introduction to *The Fourth Genre*, Root and Steinberg describe a continuum between creative texts and transactional texts. What Philippon suggests is that we should consider the rhetorical nature of all the written work and social action of nature writers.

The implication for nature writing is that a particular essay, letter, editorial, or book might focus on *one* of these natures, but that such focus does not actually indicate a particular writer has made a choice *between* nature and culture. Instead of a question of options, it is a question of emphasis: external nature or internal nature. When Philippon covers the question of language, he comes even closer to what I have done in this chapter and the rest of this dissertation. He writes that his book, "attempts to explore the problem of language in two senses: the epistemological question of how these writers [Theodore Roosevelt, Mabel Osgood Wright, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Edward Abbey] know and represent nature, as well as the ontological status of the nature they claim to know and represent" (14). For Philippon, as I mentioned earlier, this is a matter of the controlling metaphors that each writer uses to represent nature (frontier, garden, park, wilderness, and utopia).

While there are other useful moments in Philippon's introduction, the final point I'll consider here is this:

> By emphasizing the interaction of nature and culture in a particular place, nature writing—perhaps more than any other species of writing—helps clarify the ways in which ethics is fundamentally narrative, contextual, historical, and embodied. It demonstrates that the root of our ethics is, in fact, rootedness—emerging in the interaction of self and place, mind and body, reason and emotion, fact and value. (21).

This previews the connection between narrative and metaphor that Philippon addresses in his final chapter. Nelson himself mentions the ethical interaction among the sites Philippon describes when he writes, "the exploration [of the island] led in directions I hadn't anticipated, as the island became more deeply interwoven with events in my

personal life and gave a physical context to the ideas passed on by friends or gleaned from literature" (xii). For Nelson, then, the island is more than simply a real, material place. It is the nexus of personal, natural and cultural history. Moreover, Nelson writes, "I also realized that the particular place I'd chosen was less important than the fact that I'd chosen a place and focused my life around it. Although the island has taken on great significance for me, it's no more inherently beautiful or meaningful than any other place on earth" (xii). Rhetorically, this statement accomplishes at least two things. First, it underscores a point Philippon makes about how nature writing reveals that ethics are "narrative, contextual, historical, and embodied." He clarifies the point: "I do not mean to imply that [ethics] had a geographical *foundation* but rather that it *emerges* as a property of a complex system" (285, author's emphasis). We can summarize Nelson's version of this argument like this: the island is an important place, but it is not the *most important* place. In Philippon's terms the unnamed island is the physical site for Nelson's developing ethic, personally important and useful because of the way it serves as a catalyst for and as a specific example from which to develop his ethic. This does not erase the island's geographical material importance, because an ethic—particularly an environmental ethic—must be embodied within the context of a specific place. There may be general principles for "protecting the natural community" but ultimately all such principles must be enacted with respect to local conditions and inhabitants. The second, rhetorically useful point in this passage is Nelson's unstated argument that it is important for readers of *The Island Within* to find their own important, beautiful, and meaningful places. In fact, Nelson underscores this point by reminding readers he has "used fictitious

place names and [has] altered many elements of the geography…to recount my experiences" (xii) and providing three reasons for doing so. Each reason, however, connects to the argument that we must find our own important places. While an ethic of care and responsibility should apply to all places equally, we must determine how and in what ways 'our places' are important to us.

Other critics do not see *The Island Within* as socially and politically aware in the way Philippon does or that I do. Sherman Paul, for example, writes, "No one among the nature writers I've read is so little political" (162). Reading such an assessment, I wonder if this is fair to Nelson's book. What Paul objects to—the book's lack of politics—seems to be its primarily narrative and mythological rhetoric. Nelson, with the exception of his preface and occasional moments throughout the book, prefers these modes to an overt argumentative style. Even so, *The Island Within* is not as political as a book like *Arctic Refuge: A Circle of Testimony*. Edited by Hank Lentfer and Carolyn Servid, this collection of essays was presented, in 2001, to Congress just seven weeks after the editors initially called for contributions.[13] Nor does Nelson offer some kind of immediate settlement solution. Even if he wanted this to happen, would it be politically or ecologically beneficial if everyone who read the book left for the very parts of Southeast Alaska that Nelson describes?[14] As mentioned earlier, Nelson's argument had more to do with readers finding their own places, not re-living his experiences by coming to Southeast Alaska.

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[13] This timeline is according to Milkweed Editions, the book's Minnesota-based published.

[14] This is one of the points that Lewis Ulman describes discussing with his class when reading "The Gifts."

In response to Paul's comments, Nelson has this to say: "My political agenda in the island book has to do with changing the way we think; and the way we think underlies the way we behave—the usual realm of politics" ("A Letter" 174). This is Nelson's intuitive version of Burke's persuasion to attitude: if I can change the way people think about the natural world, then I might be able to change the way they act. According to this logic, politics—in terms of citizen involvement and input in legislative affairs—is secondary. Attitude comes first. Only after Nelson persuades readers to think differently can more overt political action take place. In addition, the response to Paul offers a moment where Nelson sees his book—and the descriptions within it—as not simply an aesthetic work to be admired by readers. Instead, what he provides is a direct refutation of the romantic thesis. Unlike many of the passages that I've quoted from *The Island Within*, Nelson's letter is explicit. Aesthetic works can change the way people think even when their style is not overtly argumentative.

A Hybrid Theory of Nature Writing

Scott Slovic makes the reasonable leap to suggest that nature writing, like Nelson's *The Island Within,* is actually part of a long history of persuasive rhetoric (83). For Slovic, writers and critics of nature writing, "have been reluctant to articulate the precise relationship between epistemology and politics" (84) and he suggests that the reason for this is that the connections may appear too simple, too obvious.[15] His larger point is to

[15] Slovic defines epistemology as "the effort to understand the nature of the universe and the relationship between human beings—or between the human self—and the natural world" and defines political as "the

develop an understanding of "the historical roots of [a] rhetorical taxonomy of American nature writing (the opposition between rhapsody/epistemology and jeremiad/politics)" (85), and suggest that many contemporary nature writers work the ground between these poles, blending what "seem[s] like competing goals" (84). To develop this history, Slovic examines the writing of Henry Beston, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, and Loren Eisley, arguing that even these writers, traditionally thought of as working one side of the dichotomy or the other, "demonstrate a combination of epistemological exploration and persuasive social critique" (86). In tracing this tradition, he reminds us that while "twentieth-century writers were not addressing physically present congregations…their work nonetheless exudes a sense of urgency and meaningfulness" (86). The result for Slovic is that "the rhetoric of nature writing demonstrates a constant awareness of the worldly context of the writer, the reader, and the rhetorical act" (86).

The problem, Slovic argues, is that "divergent reputations" of a writer's work as either rhapsody or jeremiad exist because of the way a writer uses "embedded persuasive rhetoric" or "discrete persuasive rhetoric" (86), and a work that relies on the latter can "evoke the disapproval, even the scorn" of critics (86). Such a comment suggests a tradition that wants to underscore the romantic thesis by privileging writing organized around epistemological rhetoric to the exclusion of writing that offers more overt arguments about humans' connection and duties to the natural world. Slovic acknowledges—but doesn't name—the "contemporary rhetorical theorists and literary

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effort to persuade an audience to embrace a new set of attitudes toward the environment and, potentially, to implement these enlightened attitudes in the form of relatively nondestructive behavior' (84). Both definitions represent narrowed and specific versions of the terms.

critics [who] now believe that there is no such thing as apolitical, epistemological writing" and suggests that nature writers must choose between epistemology or politics or develop work that "must vacillate wildly between the two extremes" (104). It helps to understand that Slovic's idiosyncratic use of "epistemology" seems more connected to a writer's rhapsodic, emotional description of nature and natural processes than it does to the more common definition of epistemology as a theory of knowledge. However, the connection between Slovic's use of epistemology and the more common definition is that a particular work of nature writing might be informed by or help develop a writer's particular theory of knowledge. The key distinction in Slovic's view is between description and response on one side (his "epistemology") and analysis and overt argument on the other ("politics").

After developing his history and setting up some of the perceived rhetorical problems of writers and critics alike, Slovic argues, "the most significant, long-term transformation of values is the work of writers who emphasize fundamental epistemological discoveries and whose political concerns, if any, are blurred with, or deeply embedded in the epistemological" (105). This is that heart of the hybrid rhetorical form of nature writing, and for Slovic it's the result of increased attention to contemporary culture and reader awareness. For him, *The Island Within* exemplifies this emergent genre, because:

> Rather than striking out at his readers or at certain nebulous agents of modern destruction, Nelson emphasizes his own private responses to the natural world; his various means of achieving respectful contact range from surfing in the frigid Arctic sea to hiking or running through dense forests, to hunting for deer. (106)

This is why representing material presence is so important to nature writers like Nelson. The acts themselves—taking careful notice of the whale carcass on the beach, examining specific effects of the water cycle on the island, describing specific changes to the island's beaches—embody Nelson's ethic of care and describing these acts develops his argument. As Slovic puts it, "Nelson actually goes out of his way not to antagonize readers who might think differently, to drive them away from his own extremism" (106). Slovic refers to a version of "Coming into Clearcut" published in *Harper's*, where "[Nelson's] point is to demonstrate the idea of universal responsibility for problems and for solutions" (107). He does this by including himself in those responsible for the logging, which has the effect of narrowing the distance between him and his readers. It's important to remember, however, that such a scene is only one moment of Slovic's "embedded persuasive rhetoric," in a text that isn't framed as an overtly political rhetoric (the point that Paul notes as a shortcoming). Instead, the political persuasion occurs within the frame of "an account of [Nelson's] efforts to learn about the island and understand [his] relationship to it" (xi). Nelson's evocation of presence is a key component of the narrative, but it also becomes the background of the persuasive force when the embedded moments (like the clearcut or commercial fishing passages) come up.

What Slovic's two-pole epistemological/political taxonomy of nature writing does that those of Lyon and Buell do not is make explicit the social and rhetorical character of the genre. And if Philippon offers an evaluative scheme for determining the effectiveness of a particular metaphor a writer uses for nature, Slovic's taxonomy reminds us that

nature writing—particularly contemporary nature writing—must respond to changing social and natural realties if it is to remain rhetorically effective.

The Island as Itinerary

There is a least one other way to examine immediate, actual, material experience as it relates to the rhetoric of presence in nature writing. In *Rhetorical Landscapes in America*, Gregory Clark explores some of the same ground as Slovic but turns to different sources. Clark writes, "we can find, as [Kenneth Burke] did, that the physical experience of *being there* can be more immediately and thoroughly transformative than an encounter with any of its verbal or visual representations. This is the rhetorical power of 'place'" (32, author's emphasis). What Clark describes is the experience of presence and the ways in which material circumstance (standing on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, visiting the dunes at Kitty Hawk, watching Yellowstone geysers) can persuade us in much the same way that language or art or architecture persuades.

In his introduction, Clark describes the specific scope of his project:

> This is a book about the rhetorical power that was experienced by American tourists as they followed public and publicized itineraries through the American landscape during the first century or so after the United States was established as a nation. It attempts to explain how such tourist experiences were part of the process through which diverse peoples inhabiting an expansive landscape were learning to identify themselves individually and collectively as Americans. (7)

While much of Clark's book explores how textual and visual rhetoric shape how tourists experience place, he clearly means us to understand that the places themselves and "the

physical experience of being there," can be persuasive beyond such cultural mediation. Without much trouble, we can identify contemporary versions of what Clark labels itineraries. In reference to Nelson's life and work, we have only to look at the four-color brochures and various web packaging of Alaskan itineraries. There is even a touring, sixty-minute presentation that mixes stories, music, and images, and is promoted by the cruise line as an "informative and effective Alaska marketing presentation" ("On Stage"). In web-based promotional material, prospective tourists are asked to identify with a particular version of Alaska, calling them to "watch for seals basking on ice floes, listen for the loud, deep rumble and wait for the mighty crack and thunderous crash," and suggesting that, "[a]t any moment, you could be witness to an eternal drama as nature s hand sculpts icebergs before your wondering eyes" ("Featured Ports"). Those who choose a cruise are invited to "[tr]avel back in time to a land where Ice Age giants dominate the landscape. Where whales, moose, bear and eagles roam free" ("Overview"). Here is language crafted to evoke a sense of how the iconic animals of Alaska are ready and willing participants in a recreation of a myth of American wildness and freedom. The animals and scenery are presented to the tourist who can "[c]ozy up in a teak lounge chair" ("Onboard Indulgence"). Cruise passengers can enact the ever-present American myth of having it all, which in this case means experiencing Alaskan native animals and scenery while wrapped in comfort and luxury.

In Clark's terms, such language leads, ultimately, to the creation of 'landscape,' "When people act as tourists," he writes, "they leave the *land* where they make their home to encounter *landscapes*. *Land* becomes *landscape* when it is assigned the role of

symbol, and as symbol it functions rhetorically" (9, author's emphasis). For the Alaskan cruise ship passengers, this process begins when they encounter the brochures, advertising copy, and images. These experiences work to either reinforce potential travelers' views of Alaska as 'the last great American wilderness and frontier' or begin persuading them to the attitude that this is the Alaskan landscape. According to Clark, this process is further reinforced when these potential passengers become actual tourists and experience the actual Alaskan land, ecology, and culture as a landscape. In Clark's terms, their presence within and as part of the landscape shapes both who they are and "prompts the individuals who constitute a community to adopt a common identity" (8-9). While this persuasion to common attitude can take place through textual and visual forms, it is through the rhetoric of physical presence that their identification (as Clark uses Burke's term) with the view of Alaska as a unique and uniquely American 'landscape', a image of American's sublimity and beauty as well as the continuing potential for the individual to triumph, is most powerful and lasting.

Such a view, however, overlooks additional considerations of the distinctions between travel and tourism, or more accurately given the scope of Clark's book, the distinction between tourism as a kind of travel and other kinds of travel. So, for example, Clark writes:

> Tourism always has been and probably will be prompted and guided by idealizing depictions of landscape that render people and place alike as beautiful scenery. [Clearly this is the case in my example of the ways in which the experience of an Alaskan cruises are packaged and presented.] And these renderings are not merely descriptive, regardless of the motives or intentions of those who produce and publicize them. (57)

This comes in his chapter about the role of tourism in representing and reconfirming a distanced view of the Shaker communities and a collective view of those touring the communities. Such a view neglects to consider the potential and actual countercultural representations as depicted in travel narratives—or narratives of specific places? How might these work differently from the examples Clark provides? What about—in contrast to the aesthetic distancing of the Shaker community—a narrative that actually closes the gap between land (and material place) and landscape (and image), drawing on the various techniques and versions of the rhetoric of presence? Are these narratives calling for—or helping create—the same kind of identification Clark describes? Clearly, Clark's discussion of travel narrative and the physical experience of travel as examples of epideictic rhetoric offers a starting point from which to develop answers.

I would argue that the preceding analysis of Nelson's *The Island Within* offers examples of what such narratives look like. When reading Clark's discussion of itineraries and tourism, I'm reminded of *The Island Within's* preface. Making an implicit connection with other bioregionalists, Nelson argues that it's not a national identity that we need—or that national identity isn't as important as knowing the local. "I undertook this work," he writes:

> not as a travel guide but as a guide to non-travel. My hope is to acclaim the rewards of exploring the place in which a person lives rather than searching afar, of becoming fully involved with the near-at-hand, of nurturing a deeper and more committed relationship with home, and of protecting the natural community that sustains all who live there. (xii)

This is Nelson at his most direct. He offers a competing representative anecdote that can create identification on a national scale. This anecdote suggests that depth of knowledge of a particular place can be as important as the individual experience of a collective, American tourist itinerary. Nelson's book provides another kind of itinerary. While *The Island Within* provides rich sensory detail of the island referred to in the title, the itinerary Nelson suggests and offers is methodological, not material. What he expects readers to do—if they identify with the anecdote—is to use the itinerary to "becom[e] fully involved" in their particular places. To underscore the point that what is useful is the shared approach or method as much as the specific, material places, recall this moment from Nelson's introduction. "I also realized that the particular place I'd chosen was less important than the fact that I'd chosen a place and focused my life around it" (xii). An underlying assumption behind this view is that a bioregionalist 'itinerary' offers a way—as I suggested before—of closing the gap between land and landscape. One of Nelson's concerns—a view shared by more widely known authors like Eric Schlosser and Michael Pollan—is that Americans have grown increasingly distanced from our food supply. For Nelson, the antidote to this is to rely as much as possible on local sources of food (through hunting, fishing, and gardening). For others, this might be getting involved in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or frequenting the local farmers market. All of these solutions have the benefit—as Nelson would see it—of "becoming fully involved with the near-at-hand," which include the myriad connections between the natural and the cultural. Ultimately, this itinerary relies on the importance of the rhetoric of presence and material presence.

I want to end by highlighting an interesting paradox suggested by *The Island Within*. The paradox is something that all of the writers I discuss in the dissertation have to deal with and it relates directly to the author's successful use of the rhetoric of presence. In his preface, Nelson tells readers that his desire is "to respect the island's right of privacy and to preserve its solitude" (xii), but by using the above-mentioned and discussed strategies for creating presence, he runs the likelihood of failing to respect what he describes as the island's right to privacy by making readers feel like that they know the island from Nelson's descriptions. Feeling like they know the island, some readers might want to find it. As a result, the very techniques that make *The Island Within* rhetorically effective may undermine his argument that the book is a "guide to non-travel." Nelson addresses and offers at least a partial solution to this paradox not only by changing place names (which might be a first level of defense), but also by "alter[ing] many elements of the geography" (xii), which may ward off those determined to find Nelson's chosen place. While I do not want to suggest that such alterations destroy the veracity or rhetorical effectiveness of Nelson's narrative, their use does raise some questions regarding the nature of simulation as connected to threatened places, species, and individuals. With the text as written, however, a careful reader can resolve the apparent paradox by taking up and identifying with Nelson's message that we should seek out and "acclaim the rewards of exploring the place[s] in which [we] live" (xii).

> Every native of every place is a potential tourist, and every tourist is a native of somewhere. Every native everywhere lives a life of overwhelming and crushing banality and boredom and desperation and depression, and every deed, good and bad, is an attempt to forget this. Every native would like to find a way out, every native would like a rest, every native would like a tour. But some natives—most natives in the world—cannot go anywhere.
>
> — Jamaica Kincaid, from *A Small Place*

CHAPTER THREE

The World Out There: Pico Iyer and *The Global Soul*

The chapter's subtitle refers to Iyer's 2000 book of the same name and draws on the rooted-rootless distinction that's prominent in discussions of nature writing as well as work by cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. For Tuan, the concept of rootedness is "a worldwide phenomenon." "[P]lace," he writes, "is an archive of fond memories and splendid achievements that inspire the present; place is permanent and hence reassuring to man, who sees frailty in himself and chance and flux everywhere" (*Space and Place* 154). In the case of writers like Richard Nelson, the rhetoric of presence serves to augment the memories of others by creating an individual depth of connection to place. Seen this way, nature writing becomes external memory, an alternative to oral storytelling. The language he uses in *The Island Within* responds to the exigency of "human frailty" by articulating the specific ways that he deepens his relationship with the island, identifies its importance, and develops the book as a "guide to non travel." All these goals rely in part on individual techniques of presence, like amplification, and collections of techniques, like those for creating accumulated presence and *enargeia*, described in the previous chapters.

But how do or how can rootless individuals establish rootedness, and do we always need to see rootlessness as a negative term or condition? How can individuals and peoples whose lives are subject — in very material ways—to the "chance and flux" that Tuan describes as being global find or establish their place? One way to answer these questions would be to consider the reader and the ways that an audience might react to a particular text—or the ways that a text suggests an audience should respond.[16] Some readers—particularly individuals who are members of Western mobile cultures and those fortunate enough to have adequate means—might respond (either consciously or unconsciously) that the way to combat a sense of rootlessness, individual frailty, chance and flux, is through acquisition. In this way, consumerism—a way of being that is defined both by the "stuff" we have and by the act of acquiring more stuff—becomes a substitute for the rootedness that Tuan describes. These individuals, then, replace and consume material possessions as a substitute for place. If "chance and flux" surround us, then the things we buy become a means for grounding ourselves.

What grounds people in this situation is not place—and the memories and experiences connected to a specific place—but things. In this way, any understanding of location becomes disconnected from a specific place, and, because such an understanding is connected to items that can move or become interchangeable, then one's understanding of place, too, becomes portable. Think of how, for example, a cross country move asks people to realize how much they are grounded by their possessions and not by any

[16] See Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, Walter Ong, Carolyn Miller, Porter, and Mary Jo Reiff as well as discussions related to Perelman's concept of universal audience.

particular sense of the place they are leaving. Barry Lopez speaks about this materialist dislocation and placelessness in a different way in "The American Geographies" when he writes:

> One cannot acknowledge the extent and the history of this kind of testimony [the deep knowledge and understanding of place] without being forced to the realization that something strange, if not dangerous, is afoot. Year by year, the number of people with firsthand experience in the land dwindles…in the wake of this loss of personal and local knowledge, the knowledge from which a real geography is derived, the knowledge on which a country must stand, has come hard to define but I think sinister and unsettling—the packaging and marketing of land as a form of entertainment. (135)

What follows this excerpt is Lopez's lucid discussion of simulation. He writes of "the line between authentic experience and a superficial exposure to the elements" (135-6). Unlike Clark, Lopez uses the term "landscape" to refer to the site of authentic experience, which equates with Tuan's use of "place" or Clark's use of "land." The unwritten assumption of both the passage above and the essay as a whole is that—much like Nelson argues—there is value in knowing and understanding a particular place. Lopez, like Sanders and—at times—Nelson, views place in Romantic terms, and for him

> the real landscape, in all its complexity, is distorted even further in the public imagination. No longer innately mysterious and dignified, a ground from which experience grows, it becomes a curiously generic backdrop on which experience is imposed. (136)

This condition, born of consumer culture, flattens diverse local geographies into "a homogenized national geography" (136). In this way, Lopez's critique shares details with Clark's discussion of a tourist itinerary with the exception that Lopez thinks the public as a whole no longer seems interested in individual itineraries and in the way that these

itineraries connect to a national identity. Even while making this argument, Lopez attempts to involve readers by encouraging them to identify with his first point. He yokes our acceptance of our "extent and history of this kind of testimony" to his next point about the "dangerous" practice of flattening geography. This move has us automatically accepting the later point if we accept his first point. For Lopez, the multiple and specific itineraries Clark describes get replaced by the "sinister and unsettling" effects of land as simply another diversion or amusement. Specific experiences within a particular place, of the kind Nelson would celebrate, are collapsed into generic experiences of mountain, river, or ocean. Additionally, a wholly manufactured experience like Walt Disney World's Kali River Rapids becomes equivalent to an experience in "real geography" and "real landscape," realities we no longer need, know, understand, or care about. A full day on the Nolichucky, Chattooga, or other distinct river experiences get collapsed in a theme park ride "to a loud, quick, safe equivalence, a pleasant distraction" ("The American Geographies" 136). For Lopez, this material flattening works in with a rhetorical flattening: writing and visual media no longer represent actual, varied, and specific places but create a "unifying vision of America's natural history" (137).

The flattening of manifold American geographies can lead to a lack of concern for the qualities that make a particular place important, unique, or worth appreciating. In this model, a trip to the beach, for example, becomes about the beach, any beach—or perhaps the cheapest beach—as a site for family vacations and less about a deep, meaningful connection to and personal knowledge of Rehoboth, Delaware; Sanibel, Florida; or the

difference between or Ocean City, Maryland and Ocean City, Washington. For Lopez, such

> imprecision betrays a numbing casualness, a utilitarian, expedient, and commercial frame of mind. It heralds a society in which it is no longer necessary for human beings to know where they live, except as those places are described and fixed by numbers. The truly difficult and lifelong task of discovering where one lives is finally disdained. (136-7)

Viewed rhetorically, Lopez's essay seeks to change his audience's mind by asking them first to identify with the places where they live, and second by asking them to imagine the importance of manifold American geographies. Another, unwritten element of his argument asks readers to be more thoughtful about the other places we go, places where we are not the local expert and have no first-hand knowledge.

Others, particularly those who have studied and described colonialism and empire as a site of power and as real, material circumstances might argue that rootlessness can also come not just from individual frailty or some psychological (however severe or superficial) sense of malaise, but from external forces (colonial powers, war, famine, persecution of various kinds) that require exile and abandonment of one's home place. For some groups (European Jews during the mid-twentieth century, ethnic Tibetans fleeing the People's Liberation Army in 1950, or—in the western hemisphere—the 1980 Mariel boatlift and Haitians fleeing the brutality of the Duvalier government in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s) placelessness might be a negative, but necessary condition. We could also point to a milder form of placelessness and dislocation directly connected to postcolonialism and ongoing imperialism. Think, for example, of individuals of South

Asian and Caribbean descent living in England, Puerto Ricans who move to the U.S. mainland, or—in a postcolonial reversal—the English who elected to stay in Hong Kong after its return to China. Even this handful of examples suggests a complicated connection between placed and placeless perspectives.

Placed Placelessness

This chapter emphasizes the ways in which the rhetoric of presence conveys the conditions and experience of rootlessness. It is not, however, an exhaustive study of the interconnection between material conditions and rhetorical presence in travel writing. Instead, the discussion that follows uses Pico Iyer's work as just one example of the ways in which a writer understands and expresses the contemporary situation of rootlessness. It might help to imagine that a rootless or placeless perspective is actually just as much about being at place in the world—wherever one is—as it is about placelessness, hybridity, and adaptation. Home in this sense comes to mean more than the physical space from which one is separated. One basic way to imagine this condition is as an alternative path to creating the Tuan's "archive of memories" that becomes place. This condition—part spiritual, part psychological, and part experiential—also highlights the ways in which our connections to place are rhetorical as much as they are physical.

For example, we might imagine the Mormon quest for homeland as, in part, a desire for or return to rootedness. In this way, the construction of homeland through rhetorical choices creates as much a sense of what homeland is as the actual, physical experience of being does. Alternatively, the acquisitive, consumerist impulse recently

tagged "affluenza" may be unsustainable and ecologically dangerous, but it too—as suggested above—can represent a means for creating such an archive; however, we might also imagine rootlessness not as lack, longing, or potential—or even as consumerist "negative replacement" or generic tourist experience—but as a positive, present, and immediate quality.[17] Simply put, some individuals might find their "place" in movement. We can see this emergent sense of place in the first chapter of *The Global Soul*:

> I began to wonder whether a new kind of being might not be coming to light—a citizen of this International Empire—made up of fusions (and confusions) we had not seen before; a "Global Soul" in a less exalted (and more intimate sense, more vexed) sense than the Emersonian one. The creature could be a person who had grown up in many cultures all at once—and so lived in the cracks between them—or might be one who, though rooted in background, lived and worked on a globe that propelled him from tropics to snowstorm in three hours. (18)

Unlike Ralph Waldo Emerson's version, Iyer's term does not speak to ultimate connections in the "exalted" way that "within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE" (262). Instead, Iyer's global soul speaks, perhaps, of a more limited connection between people as well as to specific circumstances of an individual. When, in the last sentence, Iyer describes a sense of disconnection that blends someone "rooted in background" with the rootless, wandering of someone who's not—as part of his or her daily circumstances—connected to any particular place, he speaks of a subgroup of individuals, one that crosses cultural and geographic borders. This chapter, then, builds

[17] *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic* (and the associated PBS series), *Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough*, and *Affluenza* are all trade-based books aimed at charting and describing this behavior and the surrounding circumstances.

on the previous chapters by theorizing the ways that such a "Global Soul" might articulate presence if, in fact, an individual does not, or cannot, develop a deep and direct connection with a particular location in the way that writers like Richard Nelson, Carolyn Scott Russell Sanders, or Rick Bass do.

One starting point for developing this theory is to remember that all of these writers are transplants and—at some point in their lives—wanderers. Embedded within their stories of rootedness are stories of loss, displacement, and searching. In fact, these writers' narratives of loss and displacement often serve as the core of such books even if the majority of the narrative explores their new homes. Works within this genre are as much about loss and longing as they are about home, center, and focus. In fact, the titles frame the way we understand the books as a subset of the rooted genre, so we have Carolyn Servid's *Of Landscape and Longing: Finding a Home at the Water's Edge*, Scott Sander's *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World*, and *Why I Came West: A Memoir* by Rick Bass. Even the title of Nelson's *The Island Within* suggests interiority as much as the details within many of the scenes develop his sense and depth of physical presence on the island.

By contrast, Iyer's work never really exhibits this doubled sense of loss and discovery. His work—in *The Global Soul* and other books, *Time* and *Harper's* articles, and elsewhere—seems focused on the various ways that individuals and cultures can find place even in a state of placelessness. Such global souls are more than simply citizens of the world, but individuals who are able in some ways to move beyond or transcend historical or cultural connections to a single, physical place. If this is the case, then it may

be that such "global soul" rootlessness necessitates a modified rhetoric of presence. As such, Iyer and other contemporary travel writers may turn to alternative techniques to document and articulate this presence. In addition, some travel writers share with nature writers like Nelson a sense of ethical responsibility to the places and cultures that they work amongst and describe.

Corrective Travel Writing: Beyond the Guidebook

In his introduction to a recent edition of *The Best American Travel Writing*, for example, Iyer recounts a particular experience in Yemen:

> I was immeasurably grateful to be able to picture the people and the broken streets our headlines [post 9/11] were now describing as a center of evil, and to be able to offer what firsthand reports I could to neighbors who otherwise knew nothing of Yemen except what they saw on screens. (xxii)

This passage addresses the authority and power of a travel writer's presence (first, in the way "I" acknowledges the presence of a particular writer in a particular location, and next, in the way this experience is represented in language for a reader) and ability to act as a time-traveling eyewitness. The passage above also points to an immediate, oral presence. What Iyer describes is not a written dispatch to his neighbors but a conversation. While Iyer doesn't make the point in the introduction, such authority suggests an ethical responsibility on the part of the travel writer, because travel writing, like much nature writing, encourages its readers to visit the places and interact with the cultures it describes. Moreover, this ethical obligation is two-fold, because—and in addition to the indirect impact of being a proxy for readers or encouraging readers to visit

the places and cultures described—Iyer and other contemporary travel writers are well aware that their physical presence and interaction with the places and cultures they describe have a direct impact on those places, individuals, and cultures. Iyer has discussed, for example the ethical implications of traveling to Burma/Myanmar given that much of the money a traveler brings to the country may end up in the hands of the junta, and travel guide publisher Lonely Planet echoes this view ("Myanmar: Overview").

Furthermore, Iyer's view of travel writing offers an alternative to the expected, typical, easily accessible, or prevailing views. We should distinguish this kind of travel writing from transactional[18] forms of travel writing like guidebooks or much of the writing in newspaper travel sections. We should also distinguish what we might classify as Iyer's corrective version of travel writing from those genres that rely on or reinforce what David Spurr describes as the eleven constituent tropes of the rhetoric of empire.[19] This corrective version of travel writing, a genre offering an antidote to mass-market travel writing's reliance on the rhetoric of empire, is exemplified through Iyer's particular choice of Yemen as an example. Readers don't know the specifics of what Iyer tells his American neighbors, but his reference to "our headlines were now describing as a center of evil" suggests that the descriptions were offered in part to address the exigency of generalized political labels, acting as an individualized, Burkean representative anecdote countering a dominant rhetorical position. A post 9/11 U.S. administration might develop

[18] Root and Steinberg, in *The Fourth Genre*. use this term to distinguish such forms of nonfiction from creative nonfiction. This distinction should—of course—be seen as a continuum, and even many mundane "transactional" documents have "creative" rhetorical flourishes.

[19] Spurr catalogs the following tropes: surveillance, appropriation, aestheticization, classification, debasement, negation, affirmation, idealization, insubstatialization, naturalization, and eroticization.

policy based on the following assumption: Yemen has terrorists, harbors terrorists, and associates itself with North Korea. Therefore, the country must be part of the problem. It's also important to remember the location of Iyer's comments, not as an introduction to his own work but as the introduction to an edition of *Best American Travel Writing*. This context suggests that Iyer is trying to define what marks the "best" writing more generally and not necessarily describe his own work. For Iyer, what defines "real American travel writing" is this:

> The American traveler is generally looking for something, and it may be something as profound, as essential, as himself or his salvation. The result is a prose less urbane, more unguarded, even more credulous that that of the Brit, and yet there is in the air some sense of transformation. (xx-xxi)

This is important for Iyer, "because for many Americans, living in a country that borders few others at a time when only one in three fellow citizens holds a passport, travel is the only way to get a living, human sense of the world around us" (xxi). One reasonable conclusion readers can draw from this—and, at least in Iyer's case, supported by points he had made during interviews and moments, like the example of Yemen above, in his work—is that a travel writer has a responsibility to readers that in many ways influences the kind of subjects he or she covers as well as the manner in which these subjects are explored and described. Of course, there's a paradox here. If only one in three Americans hold a passport for foreign travel, then the other two do not have access to the kind of "living, human sense of the world" Iyer describes. Recent trends suggest that this ratio is shrinking quickly. Just two years after Iyer's published comments, only one in four

current U.S. citizens hold valid passports.[20] The paradox is that this other, larger group needs to rely on the veracity and credulity of travel writers and others for information about and interpretations of the rest of the world, whether that world is Ottawa, Llasa, or Sana'a'. This is just one reason why both a writer's ethical obligation and the manner in which materiality is transformed into rhetorical presence are so important.

Travel Writing and Globalism

Iyer's discussion in the *Best American Travel Writing* introduction and his many interview responses suggest the importance of an individual travel writer as someone who bears witness to events around the world and often captures moments that act to correct or counter dominant discourses or ideologies. Another important and recurrent theme in his work is the ongoing influence of empire, colonialism, and globalism. In some of his writing, it's addressed through irony-laden humor, as in his portrait of Hong Kong as a place that "had based its identity on everything it wasn't" and "the portmanteau city par excellence, identified by people called Freedom Leung and Philemon Choi and Sir Run Run Shaw—the perfect site for 'market-Leninism' and all the other improvised hyphens of the age" (97-8). In other moments, it is addressed through a combination of confusion and understanding, as in this passage about Japan, his adopted home:

[20] *The New York Times* reports, "According to the State Department, an estimated 27 percent of Americans currently carry a valid passport." (Levere). A recent Associated Press story, also citing the U. S. State Department, offers a conflicting, but similar report that "74 million Americans have valid passports" (Heher). Using the 74 million figure and a United States Bureau of the Census population estimate of 301,398,373 puts the number of U.S. passport holders at 24.6 percent.

> The newly mobile world and its porous borders are a particular challenge to a uniculture like Japan, which depends for its presumed survival upon its firm distinctions and clear boundaries…[a]nd it's not always easy for me to explain that it's precisely that ability to draw strict lines around itself—to sustain an unbending sense of within and without—that draws me to Japan. (*The Global Soul* 278)

What Iyer finds fascinating about Japan is the way, as he describes it, that the country has been able to appropriate elements of other countries' cultures and traditions without diminishing its own sense of "uniculture."

One interesting and important consequence of Iyer's writing is the way that it highlights—and in many cases, obfuscates—his position of privilege. Despite the personal crises he occasionally discusses—as well as the racism he has been subject to because of his South Asian heritage—Iyer's job as correspondent for *Time* and the international assignments for other publications have provided him access to the benefits of technology and globalism without being subject to the problems, both immediate and long lasting, of imperialism and globalism. We only have to trace his education (Eton, Oxford, Harvard) to develop a shorthand version of this privilege. Alternatively, we can point to his family's special relationship with the current Dalai Llama as a suggestion of the privilege he's enjoyed. David Spurr suggests another, equally important, but more general version of privilege:

> Reporting begins with looking. Visual observation is the essence of the reporter's function as witness. But the gaze upon which the journalist so faithfully relies for knowledge marks an exclusion as well as a privilege: the privilege of inspecting, of examining, of looking at, by its nature excludes the journalist from the human reality constituted as the object of observation. (13)

Here, Spurr focuses on the journalist's professional privilege, and the remainder of his chapter discusses the ways that such privileged observation becomes a form of surveillance.[21] Reporting, as Spurr describes, also results in a disconnection from the materiality and immediacy of the situation reported. While it is no stretch to link the reporter's privilege with that of the travel writer, something that Spurr acknowledges (2), we can also link observation to an individual writer's personal privilege in ways that go beyond the genres (journalism, travel writing, etc.) or political categories (imperialist, colonialist). In this chapter, I explore some of the ways in which Iyer's writing reinforces, addresses, dismantles, or steers around his privilege. Spurr's book focuses on "mapping" and creating "an informal genealogy" of the rhetoric of empire by exploring two related questions: "How does the western writer construct a coherent representation out of the strange and (to the writer) often incomprehensible realities confronted in the non-western world?" and "What are the cultural, ideological, or literary presuppositions upon which such a construct is based? (3) To that end, I'll return to the tropes that he maps and the ways in which Iyer's work offers examples of them and, perhaps, overcomes such rhetoric in ways that move beyond his final trope, "resistance." But first, I'd like to examine issues surrounding travel writing more generally and then turn my attention to the specific links between Iyer's life (as represented in his work and in interviews) and his particular role as postmodern travel writer.[22]

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[21] After analyzing the published work of journalists—including James Agee—Spurr grounds his chapter by referring to Foucault's treatment of panopticism in *Discipline and Punish.*

[22] Iyer's postmodern approach is suggested by the title of interviews ("Postmodern Tourist") as well as in the substance of books (James Clifford's *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*)

Learning, Forgetting, and Finding Home

What strikes me about Pico Iyer's work is true of many working travel writers, those individuals for whom writing is their work and not simply a pastime. We can read his work as a series of revisions. I do not mean the kind of revision that takes place as a writer moves from story idea to published piece, but the way in which one piece of work exists in relation to previously published writing. In his books and articles, Iyer returns—either literally or through other forms of research—to places he has been before to describe a new series of moments in the place. And like most writers who revisit and re-see old material, Iyer often uses the new work as an opportunity to re-see not just the place but also his earlier, written understanding of that place. Sometimes the newer work acts like a correction to the earlier impression, and at other times it is expansion on the earlier impression.

But Iyer's work is also an act and record of self-discovery. As readers, whether we encounter Iyer in a short *Time* magazine article about the Dalai Llama based on a conversation in Dharamsala, India or over the course of a book-length work like *The Global Soul* or *Video Night in Kathmandu*, we see both Pico Iyer the observer of culture and landscape and Pico Iyer the narrator learning who he is. Of all people we might turn to for insight about Iyer's methods and language use, guidebook author and television host Rick Steves offers some brief, but useful insight. Talking about travel writers such as Iyer, Steves says, "they are almost nomadic people but they are also rooted people"

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and articles (Paul Smethurst. "Travels in Globality: Pico Iyer and Jan Morris in Hong Kong") that address his work.

("Discovering a Sense of Place"). It is this twinned existence—nomadic and rooted—that I'd suggest is the heart of Iyer's understanding and use of rootlessness to develop a sense of place and what is behind his use of the rhetoric of presence.

One thing this combination suggests is a separation *and* connection between the interiority of experience and the materiality of experience, which is simply a way to rephrase the idea that material experience is—in part—rhetorically constructed. In short, rhetoric helps shape our experience. It is not simply a language game to write or speak of nomadic and rooted as distinct, but complementary states of being. And while Steves may not be a literary critic or rhetorician, his comments are informed by a practitioner's sense of genre and tradition: the work that travel writing of various kinds does and the awareness that different sub-genres of travel writing meet the needs of different audiences. Additionally, we encounter a potential false dualism at work when thinking of the rooted and the rootless: an individual or a group must be one or the other. In this sense, it's actually quite useful to consider what someone like Steves says. The comment above comes from an interview with Michael Shapiro about his book, *A Sense of Place*, a collection of interviews with—primarily—Anglo-American travel writers. What's striking about this comment is that the nomadic but rooted quality suggests a useful way for thinking about an alternative to the rooted/rootless that Iyer's writing exemplifies.

Iyer and writers like him are far from nomadic in the same way as Bedouins. Instead, he is one example of an individual with the relative luxury of choosing—unlike other displaced or placeless people—to stay in his her home place or migrating to another place, with both options offering equal comfort and fulfillment. Given this choice, the

individual chooses the nomadic life. Books recounting the narratives of such nomads are everywhere. There is Rick Bass's multi-volume record of his move to growing sense of belonging in Montana's Yaak Valley. And, of course Richard Nelson's work (first as credentialed anthropologist leaning about the culture of Artic peoples like the Koyukon and gradually identifying with the Alaskan portion of the Pacific Northwest, settling in Sitka and writing about his growing identification with this very specific part of the country in *The Island Within)* is in part the story of becoming at home in a new place. Bass and Nelson, however, are examples of writers for whom the nomadic condition was temporary. By contrast, Iyer exemplifies and describes what we might call the privileged or willful nomad: those individuals whose lives seem always and forever to be nomadic and rooted.

What complicates this choice (making the willful or privileged part of my description initially problematic) is Iyer's particular personal and cultural history. Born in England of Indian parents, we might consider him a child of an empire, once removed from the cultural center of power. In many ways, however, he's also a child and product of America. His parents moved to the United States when he was young, and he spent his holidays and summers in the Southern California of the sixties. Iyer is also a child of privilege. He did not attend a Southern California high school, but went to Eton, and his undergraduate degree is from Oxford.[23] This privileged educational background is as

[23] See *Literature Online Biography* for these and other basic biographical details. The details also come up in interviews with Iyer.

much a part of who he is as an individual and writer as his India-born parents. In fact, he only half-jokingly suggests that it was Eton that prepared him for his current career:

> In terms of being a travel writer or a traveler, I think those British boarding schools are invaluable. It's no coincidence that in this day, although there are fewer and fewer of these schools, a disproportionate number of the travel writers that we read and enjoy come out of such backgrounds. These schools are essentially preparations for empire—they're crosses between a military and monastic training, very rigorous and tough.
>
> Really, what they're teaching you is to live very simply, on inedible food, in extremely spartan quarters, waking up at six in the morning, having cold showers, slogging through the mud on a drizzly November day, voluntarily putting yourself through a lot of hardship. In some deep way that was because most of the people coming out of the these schools 150 years ago were going to Afghanistan or India or Kenya to slog through very, very difficult circumstances. Although the empire has come and gone, it's still really a training for that. (185-86)

Iyer, then, is a product of at least three cultures: India, England, and America. Without much trouble, we could add Japan to the list. Clearly, too, he sees himself as an example of the global soul his book describes. But the passage above—even as it pokes fun at the "preparations for Empire"—offers a sense of what separates Iyer's writing from that found in guidebooks or newspapers. It indicates how his writing is based on the assumption of "hardship" and "difficult circumstances." This perspective adds to our understanding of Iyer writing from a multi-cultured background. Unlike someone like Tim Cahill, Iyer usually keeps the quotidian and extraordinary hardships in the background or below the surface of his writing. Instead of hardship becoming a theme, Iyer often focuses on issues of identity and identification.

Presence & Travel Writing: Observer-Participant-Subject

Iyer's multiple backgrounds infuse the way he writes about cultures. What comes across in the writing, however, is something other than a sense of hybridity. Instead, Iyer becomes—in an identity-driven version of linguistic code-switching—part culture-shifter and part identity-shifter in his writing. The rhetoric of presence surfaces in Iyer's work in the way he manipulates or manages his material and cultural circumstances to project a version of himself as both observer and global soul. Such manipulations are based both on his identify-shifting ability and the way people in other cultures perceive him. This shaping and projection begins with the subtitle of *The Global Soul* (*Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home*) that encourages readers to keep in mind both nomadism and rootlessness. Even before opening the book, readers encounter the conflation of Iyer the observer and journalist (a preview of the stories about other people that we meet later in the book) and Iyer the autobiographer and memoirist. Part of Iyer's ongoing ethos-building in this book, *Video Night in Kathmandu*, and *Falling off the Map* is his modulation between his role as observer-onlooker-reporter and that of participant-subject in a way that suggests a new, blended genre somewhere between narrative journalism, narrative criticism, and autobiography.[24]

Even with this twinned framing, *The Global Soul* offers few immediate and explicit cues to Iyer's overall development or even a direct guide for the reader by way of author's preface or introduction. In this respect, *The Global Soul* stands apart from Rick

[24] In this chapter and other chapters, I lean on and use terms based on ethnographic, journalistic, and rhetorical usage more than narratological usage.

Bass's *The Book of Yaak*, which includes an introduction guiding and focusing our understanding of both the work's general subject and its specific content. That book begins much like this dissertation—with an open acknowledgement of the material conditions of writing. "I shiver, as I write this," Bass describes, "I'm shivering because it's winter in my windowless unheated rat-shed of a writing cabin" (xiii). The introduction begins and develops with this evocation of Bass as individual present in the Yaak, then quickly moves toward an inclusive, declarative argument: "We need wildness to protect us from ourselves" (xv). It continues with a litany of the things "we need" and ends with a deictic moment: "Here is a chronicling, an accounting, of some of the things and places that are getting scraped clean" (xvi). Bass shows readers his cards. Such openings are not unique in contemporary narrative nonfiction. Sebastian Junger opens *The Perfect Storm* detailing his research and describing the way the book develops its mixture of documentation, retelling, and conjecture. Thoreau's *Walden*, of course, begins with his explanation of why he writes in the first person, and Nelson's *The Island Within* begins with the declaration that the book is a "guide for non travel." *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* includes a more oblique introduction, but Janisse Ray still builds her ethos and focuses readers' attention on her particular South Georgia subject.

By contrast, Iyer offers readers no introduction or preface from which they can develop a sense of what will come. This limits the direct presence of the writer as narrator and interpreter of the narrative that follows. Instead, readers come to understand *The Global Soul* by way of two epigraphs. First this:

> "What is man but a congress of nations?"

——Ralph Waldo Emerson

and then:

> "It is necessary not to be 'myself,' still less to be 'ourselves.'
> The city gives one the feeling of being at home.
> We must take the feeling of being at home into exile.
> We must be rooted in the absence of a place."
> ——Simone Weil

Like many epigraphs, these excerpts establish an author's ethos by deferring to others, allowing both the quotations and—in Iyer's case—the ethos of the writer quoted to frame the ideas and scenes that follow. Rhetorically, epigraphs carry more force than other kinds of cited sources both because of when they come in a work and how they are formatted. In terms of the rhetoric of presence and presence effects, epigraphs draw more attention to themselves than other kinds of citations. In contrast to the works of Bass, Junger, Thoreau, Nelson, and Ray, readers must rely *only* on the epigraphs for understanding the work in subsequent chapters of *The Global Soul*. The Emerson epigraph establishes what becomes one of the book's recurrent themes: the individual global soul is the product of a multiculture. It also marks the foundation, a rhetorical home, to which Iyer often returns. In *The Global Soul*, other works, and in interviews, Iyer (both implicitly and explicitly) refers to writers of the New England Renaissance like Emerson and Thoreau. "My own steadying point," Iyer writes, "ever since I could remember, had been the essays of Emerson, with their translation of Asian and ancient Greek wisdom into a code of New World optimism that turned into a private declaration of independence" (16). And in the final chapter, Iyer's fascination with such writers comes full circle when he mentions, in another kind of translation, how he "read[s]

Thoreau on sunny Sunday mornings" in his adopted home of Nara, Japan (296). The Weil quote establishes a related theme, discussed above, suggesting that one of the paths (expressed by Weil as a nearly Zen Buddhist denial) toward rootedness is—in fact—to be rootless, wandering, nomadic. In addition, the second epigraph offers a version of collective identity. The rootless do not yet form a cohesive group of individuals, an 'ourselves,' but only an aggregate 'we.' Finally, the second epigraph underscores the title and suggests that what Iyer has to say about a rooted-rootlessness is not unique. This, however, is not an indication of the book's weakness, as at least one reviewer has suggested, but its strength.[25] Iyer's book develops a series of exemplars for his concept of the global soul. It's also helpful to remember that the book does not simply warm over preexisting ideas, but that Iyer uses the global soul, much like his reference to Emerson, as a central concern for much of his writing as journalist, reviewer, and author of book-length works.

Another way to read these epigraphs—in keeping with an already mentioned theme—is to suggest that they point to, but do not explicitly offer, a Zen-Buddhist koan phrased as follows: How can one be homeless and still at home? In some ways, Iyer's book attempts to answer to the koan, providing clues and suggestions for readers so that we may develop our own answer. The key to reading this book—and to Iyer's twinned but fragmented narrative—is that the experience of finding an answer becomes more

[25] Writing in the *Christian Science Monitor***,** Merle Rubin argues, "Much of what he says has been said before…not only by other writers, but also by Iyer himself. Indeed, after the first couple of chapters, one begins to feel a fatigue not unlike jet lag" (par 8).

important than the answer itself. Paul Theroux expresses the sense of being both at home and homeless in a different manner. He writes:

> I was an outsider before I was a traveler; I was a traveler before I was a writer; I think one led to the other…When I mentioned this notion of being a stranger to my friend Oliver Sacks, he said, 'In the Kabala the first act in the creation of the universe is exile.' That made sense to me. (*Fresh Air Fiend* 1)

The connection is deeper than that as Theroux explores the sense of exile's dislocation both from his or her own home culture as well as the search for home or some kind of rootedness. Like Bass, Nelson, and Ray, Theroux offers this multi-staged anecdote, discussion of exile, and the problems of being a stranger as an introduction to his book. By contrast, Iyer offers no such explicit path.

Instead, Iyer provides epigraphs that frame the whole book and individual chapters. By reading these epigraphs, we focus on a particular way of reading. While the strategy is nothing new, readers should remember that epigraphs do not exist merely as window dressing. They serve an important rhetorical function as part of the texts in which they appear. That is, readers should read them. If we do not, we ignore important textual clues. In the case of *The Global Soul,* this reading strategy is particularly important because unlike *The Island Within*, *The Book of Yaak, Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, or even Theroux's collection *Fresh Air Fiend*, we have no author's introduction or preface guiding us toward a particular type of reading.

The book's first chapter, "The Burning House," begins with a quote from Nietzsche: "Philosophy is really homesickness: the wish to be everywhere at home." In Iyer's particular case, the second half of the statement is more immediately suggestive

than the first, and an astute reader might fill in the blanks to connect the quotation both to the general idea of a global soul and to Iyer's particular case. After the epigraph, Iyer opens the chapter *in media res*:

> Suddenly, the flames were curling seventy feet above my living room, whipped on by seventy-mile-per-hour winds that sent them ripping across the dry brush like maddened horses. I tried to call the fire department, but the phone was dead. I tried to turn the lights on, but the electricity was gone. I went upstairs again, to see that the flames, which minutes before had been a distant knife of orange cutting through a hillside, were now all around me, the view through the picture window a wall of flames. (3)

Reading on, it becomes clear that Iyer will have the opportunity to put the wisdom of the book and chapter epigraphs to the test as he describes the destruction: "I saw the fire up above lick at my room, reduce the second floor to a skeleton, [and then] charge down towards the city below" (4). After watching this devastation, Iyer writes, "I got taken to a friend's house, went across to an all-night supermarket to buy a toothbrush, and started my life anew" (4). The wildfire renders Iyer literally homeless, and the opening scene of the book becomes a synecdoche for Iyer's nomadic life. Furthermore, the passive "I got taken" suggests a sense of helplessness. Before moving to another scene, however, Iyer underscores his material circumstance by writing "now all the handy metaphors were actual, and the lines of the ["burning house"] poems, including in the manuscript that was the only thing in my shoulder bag when I fled, were my only real foundations for a new fin de siècle life" (5).

But this embodiment of Iyer's self-described, psychological sense of homelessness isn't so simple. Even as this experience becomes both a metaphor for and

embodied of his search for home, Iyer is already altering his and our perception of what home means. In the passage above, he writes of "my living room" and "my room," but it is only later, and at first only obliquely, that we realize it is not actually Iyer's home, but his parents' home that has burned. Some readers might say that the actual ownership of the house is immaterial, but the first person pronouns in these passages provide strategic delay. In this case, however, the first person singular pronouns offer a sense of kairos: the danger and loss are more pressing and important because they are immediate and personal. Instead of Iyer offering an opening narrative in which he casts himself in the role of adult houseguest in his parents' home, someone removed from the tragedy, his language asks readers to see him as owner of the home. The threat—loss of house and home and place and possessions—is individual. Rhetorically, these choices increase readers' identification with and sympathy for Iyer. In addition, they make him the object of the book's "search for home" expanding its scope from a simple journalistic re-telling of others' loss and longing.

We can also see this opening scene as Iyer's means of developing both aspects of double-identification. First, readers are drawn directly into the story as narrative. This is, after all, the default position for readers or an audience of narrative: we respond to the story as story. What Hauser adds to this ordinary, yet powerful understanding of narrative comes by adding a rhetorical gloss to narratological theory. He describes Quintilian's theory of *fantasia*, which "occurs when we imagine the absent persons and events so vividly that we respond as if they were before our very eyes" (Hauser 231). If *fantasia* is rhetorically effective, it leads to *enargeia*, a condition that, as Hauser suggests, is as

much an audience function as stylistic feature of speech or writing.[26] As a result, "The audience experiences powerful feelings not just by being *told* what took place [through traditional narration], but by seeing in its details actions in agreement with nature" (231 emphasis added). Two other moments in Hauser's work can help us see double identification. First, he asserts that demonstrative rhetoric can work "before an immediate audience" (as in the case of the "street rhetoric" protests by groups like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals or Immokalee farm workers), and the second is that "rhetorical performances must [in many situation] be reenactments of actions that the audience did not immediately witness" (234-5).

In Hauser's case, *Island in Chains* asks readers not simply to identify with Indres Naidoo's narrative as narrative, but to be "brought into the emotional ambit of eyewitnesses, then carries the demonstrative force of self-evident, valid proving" (235). In short, the rhetoric of presence calls us into the material scenes in order for the visual, aural, and tactile details to argue for themselves. We could even call this an example of a literal *metaphor*, because of the way the narrator carries readers over or transports them to the scene. Such an argument for the power of specific, material experience offers an alternative description of the rhetoric of presence from those proposed by Anderson or Winterowd, who rely in part on theories of the sublime to suggest that the rhetoric of presence exists as a means to describe the indescribable. By contrast, Hauser suggests that the rhetoric of presence, which he describes in terms of demonstrative rhetoric,

[26] See the discussion of *enargeia* in previous chapters. We can also view *enargeia* as the place where materiality and the rhetoric of presence meet.

begins with individual, describable experience, but these "[n]arratives of particularly persons…*are more than their individually embodied stories*. Each person's story, by the very fact that it is shared, means that this embodied being also inhabits a public place" (250 emphasis added). In this way, demonstrative rhetoric is as much public as much as a one-on-one, narrator-to-reader connection. There is, however, at least one connection between Hauser's description of demonstrative rhetoric and the rhetoric of presence as described by Anderson and Winterowd: all of these theories suggest and refer to the way that presence acts as an extralogical form of persuasion and argument. This connection is particularly important when we analyze *The Global Soul*, because the absence of an author's note, preface, or introduction places greater weight on the various persuasive and argumentative strategies within Iyer's chapters.

A Kind of Quest

It is for this reason that readers pay attention to clues like the epigraphs that do exist in *The Global Soul* and that guide our understanding of both the book's context and the specific arguments it makes. Like Nelson, Iyer relies on varies strategies of the rhetoric of presence to develop his argument, but the book's overall organization and development add to Iyer's blend of "individual embodied" experience and his attempts at universalizing conclusion. Iyer's individualizing begins with his use of definite articles not just with his book's title, but also with his chapter titles: "The Burning House," "The Airport," "The Global Marketplace," "The Multiculture," "The Games," "The Empire," and "The Alien Home." This series of chapter titles shapes our reading of a book in

which Iyer charts various elements of his universalizing global soul concept. We can also see this use of definitive articles as another strategy connected to the rhetoric of presence. Complicating this simple structure, each chapter offers a similar mixture of particularizing and universalizing as Iyer moves between narrating specific stories in particular places and making intercultural connections between these places and based on these places. What binds this confusing back-and-forth blend is Iyer's personal narrative.

The book's subtitle, "Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home," provides a second level of framing for readers, for we can then connect the house of the first chapter with the home of the last. This trajectory—from house to home—might be another universalizing concept were it not for the opening and closing scenes of the book. Both document Iyer's personal experience, offering another way that readers can understand—if the multiple, interwoven details were not enough—*The Global Soul* as a mixture (much like *The Island Within)* of memoir and cultural comment. Like the rest of the book, and its discussion of multicultures, unicultures, capitalism, and postcolonialism, the final scene blends the experiential world and the world of dreams, sleep, and translation. "Then I woke up," Iyer writes, "to the sounds of a bright Sunday morning in the northeast quarter of the ancient imperial capital of Japan, in the tenth year of the era known in English translation as 'Achieving Peace'" (298).

So we are asked to read the book much like Hauser suggests readers understand Naidoo's book, as both audience and witness to the events Iyer describes. Adding to the effect of double identification is the previously mentioned absence of an author's preface or introduction. Instead, the interpretative weight of these often-included sections gets

channeled into the way that Iyer frames the book's initial "burning house" and final "alien home" chapters with his own story. On a broad level, this organization suggests a completion of "the search for home" suggested by the title, as Iyer lets go of a house. Once burned, the place becomes "just a house" and the rootlessness described in the book is Iyer's as much as it is the individuals he describes and interviews. The final chapter's inclusion of the word "home" can be seen as an example of Iyer's implicit argument (how can we be rooted in our rootlessness) working on the book level. The last chapter, however, does not make this search easy. The full title, "The Alien Home," suggests that even if the search for home is complete, it is also in some ways a place that can never be fully known or inhabited in the way that bioregionalist writers like Nelson suggest. What supports this reading is the dream state of the book's penultimate scene: "That night," Iyer writes:

> I fell into a deep, deep sleep, and found myself in a country house in England.…Somewhere, Lou Reed was playing 'Heroin' and upstairs there were some fashion magazines, and a few half-familiar figures drifted in and out. All the unremarkable languor of a weekend in the country.
>
> And something in this unexceptional scene felt absolutely right. I couldn't find the words, and I didn't need to find them, but as I slept, I heard myself saying, of the everyday English scene, 'This is my home. This is where I belong. Usually, I'm not very sociable, but this is me.' (297-8)

This scene, of course, occurs right before he wakes up in Kyoto. The specific place that Iyer declares to be his "home" is simply a dream world, and in this state Iyer find himself uttering "[w]ords I never thought to say in waking life, but here, suddenly, I could not just feel and see all the days of my childhood but taste them and be inside them…on a

night [the Japanese holiday of Obon] when departed spirits find their way back home" (298). Like Wolfe, Iyer finds himself searching for language to describe the experience, and the beginning of the passage emphasizes feeling and affect over sensory experience. The final moment of the passage, however, echoes Nelson's understanding of the mountain god in *The Island Within*. Like Nelson is his book, Iyer describes a moment of being fully aware of a place with all of his senses (fully present there), but one that is also attached to the more than sensory. Nelson, as a result, draws on the mountain god and Iyer draws on the power of the "departed spirits" during Obon. In both cases, it seems as though we cannot fully "see" a place through experience, and that language may not be fully able to describe the condition of being 'at home." Instead, both writers use distance to help point to connectedness: Nelson in the way he describes the island while moving away from it, and Iyer in the way he describes home in a dream state.

This passage, however, comes even as Iyer's personal narrative in the book's final chapter builds toward identifying Japan as his home, a connection he makes because of his close observation and understanding, much like Nelson, of the local. "I can tell when the trees in the park are *going to change color*," Iyer writes, but he also knows "when the vending machines will change their offerings from hot to iced" and ends the paragraph by writing, "that in our mongrel, mixed-up planet, this may be as close to the calm and clarity of Walden as one can find" (296, emphasis added). The deictic "this" points both to the specific place and to the collection of observations and habits that characterize Iyer's familiarity with Nara, Japan. Even so, just as Iyer uses this chapter to help readers understand the ways in which he can identify Nara as "home," many of his descriptions

emphasize 'alien" qualities and the foreignness of his experience. Most dramatically, this occurs in the way Iyer juxtaposes the dream of an English home with the book's final paragraph rooting his material existence in Japan. We could even see these modulations between presence and absence, home and not home, familiarly and foreign, as markers of the rhetoric of presence. That is, a writer can develop the rhetoric of presence by pointing toward material understanding from a distance, so Iyer sees and finds something of Walden in Nara. A final way to read such a passage is to think of it as Iyer's postmodern version of Nelson's bioregionalism. Iyer's familiarity with the natural and cultural patterns of Nara resembles Nelson's familiarly with the rain, water, tides, and the activity patterns of bears and deer on his island. Seen this way, both writers seem to find home in the same way.

Throughout the book, however, Iyer provides more subtle shifts in his definitions and personal sense of "home." Sometimes he uses the word to refer to the United States in general or to Southern California in particular. Such is the case in the reference to "my living room" in the opening paragraph (3), and later to "the ashes of my [Southern California] home" at the end of the first chapter (38). Iyer's connection to England is just as rich as his connection to California, and he interweaves stories of growing up and going to school there, but the places of England, even as Iyer mentions his British Passport (42), never receive the same attention or handling of home as does the United States. Instead, he argues, "colonialism had given me…the chance to grow up so close to the heart of Empire that I could never be enthralled by it" (246). Such a remark is just one indication of the way in which Iyer seems less rooted to the places of England

—even as they make up part of his individual and family history. Oxford, for example, is "the grimy, everyday industrial town in which I'd been born" and England overall is a place and culture, "I knew too well.…as familiar as yesterday's breakfast" (257). By contrast, he describes California and Japan as "adopted home[s]" (5). Just as quickly, however, he claims a less solid, more mutable sense of the world and his place in it: "With any of my potential homes, in fact, I could claim or deny attachment *when I chose*" (21, emphasis added). Iyer, however, never uses "home" to refer to India. Instead, readers come to know India in less direct ways as Iyer refers to his parents' "hometown of Bombay the largest 'British' city outside London" (17-18) or to his choice of "Calling myself Indian in Cuba" (25), or when he describes India as "The country where people look like me," but "one where I can't speak the language" (24). In fact, the closest Iyer comes is in his chapter on Hong Kong when, after referring to Kazuo Ishiguro, he writes, "just as I, who's seldom been in India, am 100 percent Indian" (106). This last moment, of course, says more about Iyer's cultural and ethnic heritage that it does about his choice of place or places to call home.

An Uncomfortable Presence

If a pattern exists in the way that Iyer employs the rhetoric of presence in *The Global Soul*, then it rests in his discomfort with the sense of a specific place as home and reliance on moves that confuse, obscure, and occasionally dismantle his tentative national and local affiliations. Instead of leaning on assurances about the usefulness and importance that come from a depth of knowledge of a particular place, Iyer describes himself as

placeless and rootless. A writer like Nelson, by contrast, links his physical presence on his unnamed island, Sitka, and Southeast Alaska with his developing understanding of those places as home, so he and other bioregionalists suggest that it is a specific, identifiable, material place with which we should concern ourselves. They understand, describe, and argue for the interconnectedness of individual, place, and other individuals and places. In contrast to this view, Iyer describes himself like this:

> surrounded by cheering fans waving flags, [I] am often reminded how difficult it is for the rootless to root for anyone, and, reluctant to ally myself with a Britain, an India, or an America that I *don't think of as home*, generally end up cheering the majestically talented Cubans or the perennial good sportsman from Japan. (176 emphasis added).

While Iyer offers these comments within the context of the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, his phrasing and an earlier reference to "covering six Olympiads in the past fifteen years" (175) suggest that his sentiment is not momentary. If one were to read the book quickly or neglect the title and chapter structure of *The Global Soul*, then it might be tempting to dismiss Iyer's earlier identification of the mountainside Santa Barbara house as "home." With such a quick reading, we might see the word choice as a simple exchange of synonyms. The overall development of the book, and the fact that Iyer pauses so often to include other versions of what the word "home" means, suggest that this is not an accidental habit. Instead, we can read it as one of many instances that mark Iyer's ongoing quest for and discomfort with finding and defining home.

In this way, we can fruitfully think of Iyer's use of the rhetoric of presence more in terms of argumentative strategy and less in terms of his desire to render his specific,

material experience into language. As Tucker reminds us, presence, in Perelman's sense, "is the property of 'standing-out-ness,' the property possessed by a figure distinguished from an ambiguous ground. The rhetor gives presence to one particular way of looking at things. This has the inevitable effect of occluding the interpretations not selected" (410). Applying this understanding of presence to Iyer's work, we can argue that *The Global Soul*—from the subtitle to the choice of epigraphs and narrative scenes—makes present the "search for home." In Tucker's terms, this framing excludes readers from seeing this book as simply one of many seeking to define, once and for all, globalism, rootlessness, or uniculture. Instead, the presence Iyer wants readers to examine is the search, not the destination. Perhaps the final clue that it is *this* reading Iyer wants us to come to is that—despite all his movement back and forth in time—both the first ("Suddenly, the flames were curling seventy feet above my living room, whipped on by seventy-mile-per-hour winds that sent them ripping across the dry brush like maddened horses" [3]) and last ("Then I woke up, to the sounds of a bright Sunday morning in the northeast quarter of the ancient imperial capital of Japan, in the tenth year of the era known in English translation as 'Achieving Peace'" [298]) sentences of *The Global Soul* include present participles ("burning" and "achieving"), a strategy that further foregrounds ongoing process, reminding readers of becoming as much as describing history or making absolute, once-and-for-all claims.

Additionally, we can see Iyer's work as an example of the ways that "travel writing is currently resuscitating itself in the face of globalization" (Lisle 3). For Iyer, this means telling personal stories as an antidote to sweeping global and cultural narratives.

He does not, however, deny grand narratives altogether. In fact, they often become part of his story:

> Through *pure coincidence*, my family had ended up following the very course of Empires, from India in the last days of the British, to England as it was falling under the spell of America, to American itself in the mid-sixties, when the American century was at its zenith and the psychedelic California *in which we found ourselves* was suddenly on every screen. Later, *again by chance*, I would go to Japan just as it was buying up Rockefeller Center and Columbia Pictures, in the late eighties, and becoming what looked to be a new center of gravity. (257-8 emphasis added)

As the passage suggests, these narratives of Empire unfold next to Iyer's family narrative. The connection, so Iyer tells us, is accidental. While he often refers to the ways in which his family history is directly related to empire, like the way his Indian parents choose not to teach him a language other than English or how he is chosen to play a role in *Midsummer Night's Dream* because he is "the only little Indian boy in Oxford" (256), it is the accidental connections that he underscores. What the personal thread in Iyer's book makes present—even with his Emersonian references—is that history as well as contemporary culture and geopolitics is as much about the personal as it is about the social.

Lisle's view of Iyer's approach, however, is not so charitable. She writes, "I see the problem of Iyer as the problem of cosmopolitanism: a refusal to see that his hybrid and homeless subjectivity is in fact saturated with privilege" (118), and later echoes and amplifies this claim writing, "Iyer is unwilling to explore how his own position—hybrid as it might be—is saturated with privilege" (123). She does, however, concede this point: "[H]e does confront the dynamics of globalisation and mobility that the genre has so far

been ignoring" (272). Iyer has also shown that he is not unaware of these issues. In an interview, he acknowledges the problem of privilege as well as issues of cultural imperialism and romantic notions of travel: "We want our DVD players and our cars and our flat-screen TVs. We want these other countries to remain quaintly picturesque" ("When Worlds Collude" 191). At least one reviewer of the book objected to the manifestation of this refusal in the proliferation of examples that point to Iyer's own global soul credentials (the post-empire Hong Kong chapter, "The Global Marketplace" is one example of this that Lisle also mentions) and the way he, "particularly relishes multinational pileups" (Sante par 4). At least on the surface, Lisle's criticism may be valid. Readers may get the sense that Iyer is trying to pass off an exceptionally fortunate life, filled with millions of frequent-flyer miles, as ordinary when reading a passage like this:

> I called up a Chinese friend who I'd first met in Nepal (where he'd been working on an Anglo-Italian film about the Buddha), and his Japanese-American wife picked up.
>
> 'What time is it in California?' she asked me sweetly.
>
> Four p.m.' I said looking out at the early [Hong Kong] light. (91)

But the introduction and the rest of the book are equally *saturated* with moments when Iyer draws attention, both explicitly and implicitly, to his privilege. In addition, Iyer clearly addresses the privileged position of traveler as well as his particular, privileged circumstance in several interviews (London, Weich).

We can also look to word frequencies as another clue to what Iyer wants to make present to readers. The only words that occur more frequently than "home," which occurs

198 times, are "world" (329), "people" (228), "new" (241), and "city" (232). "Place" occurs the same number of times as "home." This means that these two words occur, on average, on two of every three pages, and while neither this chapter nor the dissertation as a whole offers extended linguistic analysis, such frequencies begin to suggest the ways in which Iyer's book of searching for home shares key terms with writers like Nelson, Berry, Ray, and Lopez. "Global," by contrast, occurs 149 times, but "soul" does not make the list of frequently-occurring words, which cuts off with words like "look" and "seen" (emphasizing the visualization of *enargeia*) which appear 62 times each.[27] These word frequencies can help us further understand Iyer's writerly preoccupations. We can, for instance yoke "home" and "place," but cannot ignore words like "world" (which, perhaps, suggests a more objective connotation and sense of place than a word like "global," connoting—perhaps—a more subjective, or culturally informed sense of the world), "city" (which we can see when we look at the ways in which scenes and chapters focus on urban areas), and "people" (suggesting a focus, perhaps, on individuals and cultural environments and less on physical environments). Striking among these frequently occurring words is "new." What's interesting about this word is that, once we get rid of the occurrence like "New York," we begin to see phrases like "new home," "new kinds," and "new beings." All of these suggest transition and movement.

While this brief frequency analysis does not, on its own, provide a complete sense of the rhetorical patterns within *The Global Soul*, it does suggest the ways in which this

[27] Figures based on Amazon.com's concordance, which is limited to the top 100 words in any book. The words that round up the top ten are time (197), even (193), now (179), and day (177).

handful of words underscores Iyer's thematic concern with place and placelessness. He oscillates between a grounding sense of place and a dislocated sense of everywhere (but nowhere) at once. At moments, readers get a specific sense of how Iyer's writing is, to refer again to Lisle's claim, "resuscitating itself in the face of globalization" (3). In the opening chapter for example, Iyer expresses the sense of confusion that underlies his discomfort. "Enabled, I hope, to live a little above parochialisms, I exult in the fact that I can see everywhere with a flexible eye; the very notion of home is foreign to me, and the state of foreignness is the closest thing I know to home" (24). We might see this conceptually chiastic passage and the syntactically chiastic final sentence as one of the many mini summaries or introductions Iyer peppers throughout the book. This might explain Iyer's particular situation, but it is also clear that he is not unaware of a larger context:

> In recent years, any number of books have begun to speak of our global future, but very few of the ones that I have seen have spoken of our dreams, of disconnection, of displacement, of being lost within a labyrinth of impersonal spaces…And nearly all of them have read as if they were aimed at political scientists or public policy experts. (36)

Iyer then offers this:

> I thought it might be interesting, therefore, to try to take some readings of how this shaking planet felt and looked at ground level to a not entirely untypical global villager making his way through a scrambled world [, so] I decided to see how these forces crisscrossed, unbidden, in one life as one (admittedly privileged) Global Soul went about his business, seeing friends, reading the novels that fell into his lap, going now and then on trips for business and pleasure. Though in a much less desperate sense than most of the world's peoples, I too, had a strong incentive in finding

> out where I belonged, as, with my house burned down, I'd been stripped of a past, and of a future I'd imagined. (36-7)

Iyer describes something like Turner's liminality; however, given the discomfort expressed elsewhere in *The Global Soul,* it does not seem that the global soul state is temporary. While this passage suggests that there have already been books about a general sense of globalism, Iyer suggests that a gap exists in stories articulating the countercurrents of globalism. Where are, he asks, the narratives that speak of the discontent with the sweeping, anonymous push of globalism? And where are the stories that speak to the rest of us? Finally, while this passage acknowledges the problem of privilege, it also suggests and reinforces the sense that a search for home crosses may kinds of spaces and boundaries. Some of these spaces and boundaries are material, while others are conceptual or rhetorical, and some blend all three. One example of this blended "impersonal space," as Iyer phrases it, is the airport, which for him is also "a nonplace, an interval of sorts" (42).

The Narrative of Journalism

Unlike narratives that focus on providing readers a sense of the writer's growing depth of presence in a particular place (as in writing by Richard Nelson, Scott Sanders, and Gretel Ehrlich) or recounting the existing depth of individual, familial, and cultural knowledge of a particular place (like Janisse's Ray's *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*), narratives of place that involve travel or displacement—those with a narrator/central character moving through an unfamiliar landscape or those attempting to capture the sense of movement

itself—cannot rely on a rhetoric of presence that invokes a depth of knowledge of that place. It is perhaps obvious that many travel writers turn to a deceptively simple technique—present tense narration—to create a sense of presence. It's interesting, then, that the frame for *The Global Soul*, begins by using past progressive ("were curling," "were leaping" are used for the flames) and past ("tried," "fell," and "sat" are used for Iyer's own actions) tense verb forms. At the same time, however, Iyer asks readers to approach the book through his personal narrative, a choice that brings forward his experience but also suggests that experience as a narrative and not as a mere travelogue. To that extent, *The Global Soul* presents a rhetorically constructed version of a series of events as much as it reports the details of individual episodes. By placing Spurr's account of the "temporal dimension of the journalistic aesthetic" on top of Iyer's book (43), we can see the ways in which this pattern works rhetorically in concert with the thematic pattern of "the search for home." Spurr divides journalism's narrative structure into three parts. First, a "story typically begins with a revelation, introducing a dramatic situation and series of characters. The second stage is devoted to development: the expansion or explication of elements in the original discovery," while a "final stage brings about a resolution, as the action play itself out and stabilizes, while an appropriate response to the action is produced" (44).

While we might easily connect and recognize this pattern in any number of narratological studies of drama or fiction, it's important to remember that Spurr's discussion refers not to screenplays, stage plays, or novels, but to journalism's collective packaging and framing of on-the-ground details and circumstances into stories and

events. I mention this point not to suggests that nonfiction narratives are different from other narratives, but to remind readers of the particular ethical weight of journalism. If practiced responsibly, journalism's narratives have duties that go beyond aesthetic considerations, and journalists ought to concern themselves with the ways in which readers will respond to and act on their stories. Although *The Rhetoric of Empire* never refers to Kenneth Burke, we can view Spurr's discussion of journalism's narrative structure as a particular example of dramatism in action or what Burke calls "progressive form…a structure so arranged that the audience is in tune with its development" (331). Such a point highlights the way in which much of Iyer's short form journalism (principally for *Time*) engages in the generic practice of revelation-development-resolution that Spurr describes. Even so, and as much as *The Global Soul* follows this overall pattern, Iyer finds ways to disrupt it, much as he disrupts easy placed-placeless distinctions in both small- and large scale ways like the seemingly paradoxical title of his final chapter, "The Alien Home."

Writing for Airports

This twinned feeding and confounding of generic expectation happens elsewhere in the book, as in Iyer's chapter centered on Los Angeles International Airport. At least two published versions of the work exist. The first, "Where Worlds Collide," appeared in the August 1995 issue of *Harper's Magazine*. The second, longer version appears in *The Global Soul* as "The Airport." In the *Harper's* version, Iyer follows the revelation-development-resolution model described by Spurr, opening with the perspective of recent

American immigrants. The work, even as it holds immigrants at a distance, referring to them as "they," pauses briefly to explore individual stories like the "Pakistani security guard"(53) and the "'"Ethiopian waitress" (55). Even so, these individuals remain mostly anonymous, typed by country or culture instead of being described in terms of detailed personal experience. When Iyer does name individuals, the practice has more to do with the larger rhetorical pattern of amplifying the collision of cultures suggested by the title than it does with showing readers the circumstances of individual people: "I was served by a Hoa, an Ephraim, and a Glinda," Iyer writes, "the wait-people at a coffee shop in Terminal 5 were called Ignacio, Ever, Aura, and Erick" (54). Development, then, comes by way of the experiences and details of these nameless individuals, collective immigrants and other travelers, leading readers away from identification. This suggests that the real story of "Where Worlds Collide" is not in the experience of any one person, but an analysis of the airport as location that both embodies and suggests (in the twinned sense of the rhetoric of presence) displacement, homelessness, and movement. Even while the article exhibits the first two parts of Spurr's pattern, Iyer's work fails to deliver a resolution and the stability of print journalism. Instead, Iyer recreates the material presence and confusion of the new immigrant and the article, and instead of providing readers with a resolution, simply ends: "I thought: welcome to America, Miss Kudo, welcome to L.A." (57).

Moving Beyond Traditional Models of Travel Writing

"Where Worlds Collide" is also the article that introduces first-year writing students to Iyer's writing.[28] This is interesting and helpful because it suggests something about the way that *Harper's* readers and university undergraduates encounter Iyer's version of travel writing. It is this essay that my own first-year students encounter when reading alternative forms of travel writing and during course discussions of creative nonfiction. I use the term "alternative travel writing" to describe Iyer's work, but particularly "Where Worlds Collide," because of the way it redefines what travel writing is and what travel looks like. In a recent interview Iyer explains the shift like this:

> A travel writer has to rethink what discovery means, and exoticism and movement. That's why, having done a lot of descriptions of other countries, I went and spent two weeks in the Los Angeles airport as a way to claim it as a different kind of destination. Of course, you could do the same with a shopping mall [as is the case with Jennifer Price and other writers] or a hotel or a hospital. And all that I regard as travel writing. ("On Travel")

In terms of the subject of writing—or the most basic observational tools of sociology and anthropology—the point seems obvious: any subject, any individual, and any place holds potential interest and can teach us something about itself, about how we see it, and about ourselves. If we move past the surface, however, we can read Iyer's comment as a writer's call to action, addressing an important exigency. The traditional forms of travel writing have exhausted their impact and interest. To that end, "[t]ravel writers are being

[28] Versions of the article appear also appear the creative nonfiction textbook/reader *Tell it Slant* edited by Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola, Root and Steinberg's reader *The Fourth Genre*, and Cheryl Glenn's *Making Sense: A New Rhetorical Reader*.

forced to turn their lenses in different directions" ("On Travel"), and to rework the basic assumptions of the various subgenres of travel writing.

Rightly then, we should see Iyer's ideas as part of a larger tradition and ongoing movement toward a particular kind of self-conscious narrative nonfiction that both reacts to existing forms and structures and responds with newer forms. We only have to think about the techniques in allied genres like narrative journalism (like Michael Herr's *Dispatches*) or even examples of "critical travel writing" (like Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*). In both examples—written almost ten and twenty years before Iyer's LAX essay—we can see how terms like "discover," "exoticism," and "movement" are reconsidered by the authors' ideas and language use.

Likewise, Iyer's work might be seen as in part a reaction to the rhetoric of empire that characterizes much classical and contemporary travel writing. In contemporary travel writing, such rhetoric is still easy to find, mostly in guidebooks and travel magazines, both budget and luxe, where language suggests the (basic) comforts of home are easily found and one need not venture away from the compound like-resort. Put more forcefully, Lisle argues that not just guidebooks or newspaper travel writing, but "travelogues [even Iyer's] play an *active* role in the reproduction of discursive hegemony and can therefore be held responsible in some measure for the political consequences of those forces" (261 author's emphasis). I would still argue, unlike Lisle, that Iyer is not "unaware of how [his writing] contributes to and encourages the prevailing discursive hegemonies at work in global politics" (261). If we were to look only at "Where World's Collide" and the way that article, on the surface at least, holds its human subjects at a

distance and fails to interact with them, then it might be easy to conclude that Iyer is simply using cultural or national shorthand instead of connecting to and describing individuals. Instead, I see "Where Worlds Collide" as similar in intent to the section of *A Small Place* where Kincaid uses second-person, present-tense narration to both show and critique a typically western view of travel. For Kincaid, this consumerist vacation gets disconnected from any notion of interactive or ethical responsibility. Both *The Global Soul* and "Where Worlds Collide" share Kincaid's experiment with alternative subjectivity as a form of the rhetoric of presence. In Kincaid's case that subjectivity forces readers to become Caribbean tourists:

> You must not wonder what exactly happened to the contents of your lavatory when you flushed it. You must not wonder where your bathwater went when you pulled out the stopper. You must not wonder what happened when you brushed your teeth. (13-14)

This is not the language of double-identification Hauser suggests. The "you" functions not as direct address, but as signal that readers are present participants in the narrative. Kincaid requires that readers step past their role as audience and become the tourist "you." Both the anaphoric "you must not" and Kincaid's authorial interjections—"There is a world of something in this, but I can't go into it right now" (14)—draw attention to the reader-as-tourist construction and signal that what we are reading—even as it depicts a certain kind of travel experience in Antigua—is critique. The language she uses offers an example of a self-conscious rhetoric of presence with reader cast as tourist in order for us to develop "a critical understanding of [colonial discourse's] structures" (Spurr 185). In this way, we can see Kincaid's book as an overt form of the kind of resistance

Spurr—starting with work by Heidegger, Foucault, Nandy, and Bhabha—describes in his last chapter.

After citing and discussing Bourdieau, Geertz, and Clifford as examples of how such controlling, colonialist rhetoric has been addressed in anthropology, Spurr offers four "gestures of resistance" that operate "as a set of critical or interpretive problems which certain journalists have tried to address" (189):

the question of language (189-91),

the conditions of observation (191-2),

the consciousness of interest (192-3), and

other voices (193-4).

While the observations he offers are not particularly new or surprising (rhetoricians could easily find and cite classical and contemporary texts offering the same advice) his choice of audience—journalists—seems to be. Spurr suggests that journalists need to practice the same kind of rhetorical self-consciousness that composition (and one would hope, journalism) teachers ask their students to practice. This brings the discussion back to Iyer's suggestion that writers need to reconsider terms like "discovery," "exoticism," and "movement." The opening of "Where Worlds Collide" offers Iyer's example of a new kind of discovery:

> They come out, blinking, into the bleached, forgetful sunshine, in Dodgers caps and Rodeo Drive T-shirts, with the maps their cousins have drawn for them and the images they've brought over from *Cops* and *Terminator 2*; they come out, dazed, disoriented, heads still partly in the clouds, bodies still several time zones—or centuries—away, and they step into the Promised Land.

> In front of them is a Van Stop, a Bus Stop, a Courtesy Tram Stop, and a Shuttle Bus Stop (the shuttles themselves tracing circuits A, B, and C). At the Shuttle Bus Stop, they see the All American Shuttle, the Apollo Shuttle, Celebrity Airport Livery, the Great American Stageline, the Movie Shuttle, the Transport, Ride-4-You, and forty-two other magic buses waiting to whisk them everywhere from Bakersfield to Disneyland. They see Koreans piling into the Taeguk Airport Shuttle and the Seoul Shuttle, which will take them to Koreatown without their ever feeling they've left home; they see newcomers from the Middle East disappearing under the Arabic script of the Sahara Shuttle. They see fast-talking, finger-snapping, palm-slapping jive artists straight from their TV screens shouting incomprehensible slogans about deals, destinations, and drugs. Over there is a block-long white limo, a Lincoln Continental, and, over there, a black Chevy Blazer with Mexican stickers all over its windows, being towed. They have arrived in the Land of Opportunity, and the opportunities are swirling dizzily, promiscuously, around them. (50)

Among the many ways this passage operates against colonialist discourse is through reversal of appropriation, and an absence of surveillance. Although the passage begins—and ends—with third person plural pronouns, the writer's presence lies below the surface. As readers, we are placed in the position of discovery along with the "they" of the passage. Here, however, the discovery is not of Mayan ruins or Polynesian beaches and the exoticism described is not that of Quito or Guadalcanal, but LAX. The people readers meet are, in fact, bringing American culture—as well as their own particular, Hollywood-filtered version of that culture—back to the United States. We are asked to see LAX and Los Angeles through their eyes and expectations. But in this case, the original readers are not potential American holiday-goers, or tourists looking to chalk up their next big exotic adventure getting a rundown on "what to expect" from a guidebook author or freelance travel writer. Readers are not even the "you" of Kincaid's *A Small*

Place. In this case, the article's frame is the "exotic" world's view of the United States. Here, however, exoticism becomes a recitation of American newcomers encountering a seemingly endless selection of tour buses. In this opening, movement comes by way of return. American readers find themselves reading about America as the other, seeing the country from an outsider's perspective.

Airports and Identification

Seen one way, this is simply an effective use of a common narrative technique, limited third person narration. Seen another way, it's Iyer's way of focusing attention not on someone but through someone, offering the second type of identification Hauser describes, where "we now respond 'as if' present [in the] scene and participating in it" (247). Seen in this way, the opening scene in "Where Worlds Collide," becomes Iyer's rhetorical attempt to induce Burkean identification, countering potential criticisms like the ones Iyer addresses when he says, "I think there would be other people who would have complaints about Orientalism [in my work] or about imaginative imperialism when writing about the West's meeting with the East. But that's never concerned me too much" ("On Travel"). Here Iyer's response is directed at potential criticism of his first book, *Video Night in Kathmandu*, but passages like the opening scene quoted above show that Iyer's writing—if not his interviewee persona—do address these concerns.

Even when Iyer introduces himself in the article, it is by way of identification. The newcomer's-eye-view of LAX continues for some time, and in a transitional paragraph, we learn "L.A., legendarily, has more Thais than any city but Bangkok, more

Koreans than any city but Seoul, more El Salvadorans than any city outside of San Salvador, more Druze than anywhere but Beirut" (51). While the information is admittedly apocryphal, it does suggest a merging of cultures or a reverse appropriation. Iyer also visits the information desk:

> I was told I could request help in Khamu, Mien, Tigrinya, Tajiki, Pashto, Dari, Pangasinan, Pampangan, Waray-Waray, Bambara, Twi, and Bicolano (as well, of course, as French, German, and eleven languages from India). LAX is as clear an image as exists today of the world we are about to enter, and of the world that's entering us." (51)

Like the opening list of overabundant shuttle buses, this list of languages suggests not a narrowed American culture, but a polyglot one.

When Iyer finally appears in the article, he introduces himself by way of further identification with the traditional colonial, and emerging postcolonial, other:

> For me, though, LAX has always had a more personal resonance: it was in LAX that I arrived myself as a new immigrant, in 1966; and from the time I was in the fourth grade, it was to LAX that I would go three times a year, as an "unaccompanied minor,' to fly to school in London—and to LAX that I returned three times a year for my holidays. Sometimes it seems as if I have spent half my life in LAX. For me, it is the site of my liberation (from school, from the Old World, from home) and the place where I came to design my own new future. (51-52)

This passage marks Iyer, not as observer, but participant. He is among those who share the LAX arrival experience. In addition, it reinforces and particularizes a reader's sense of identification. An essay or article that moved from beginning to end by describing an undifferentiated group of American newcomers might lose its holding power and rhetorical intensity. Iyer can particularize his story by focusing on a representative

individual and taking a more traditional reporter's stance, but this strategy might shatter the identification readers develop. In order to maintain both the immigrant's viewpoint and immersive presence effects, Iyer places himself in the article by way of identification, offering his own experience of immigration. Structurally, this paragraph also serves as a transition between the opening and the rest of the article where we see LAX filtered through Iyer's narrative consciousness. This strategy creates a greater sense of identification and presence than mixing reportorial observation and reflection. In this example of Iyer's rethinking of travel writing we are never allowed the opportunity to step out of the story in the way of a travelogue of a guidebook, entering at will and holding ourselves at a distance from the subject. Even in the reflective moments of the article, readers have the immersive opening anchor, grounding us to the presence of the airport. At the same time, airports are something to which many readers—though obviously not all—can relate. Many contemporary immigrants arrive by plane. And while not all American have traveled by plane—even on domestic flights—raw numbers suggests many are familiar with air travel and airports.[29]

The movement readers experience has changed from identification with immigrants in general to identification of Iyer with this collection of individuals (and, as a result, our identification with him). Another level of identification is the way in which

[29] In 2006, there were, "658.2 million scheduled domestic passengers" and "86.2 million scheduled international passengers," as reported by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics. These numbers make no distinction between travelers' nationality or between single flight and multiple flight passengers.

the airport is becoming a synecdoche for human experience in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Such a structure is common in Iyer's work:

> So, for example, when I am writing about Tibet now, it would be less of Tibet in itself and more of Tibet as a model of exile and of the 21st century conundrum of how to construct a home when you've lost your physical home and how to use exile to create a whole new virtual, invisible kind of community, as the Dalai Lama is trying to do. ("On Travel")

If we think about "Where Worlds Collide" in this way, then LAX becomes just one example of the collection of experience one has in airports and the sense that airports either induce or serve as a site of "an odd kind of twilight zone of consciousness, that weightless limbo of a world in which people are between lives and between selves" and that "people are at the far edge of themselves in airports, ready to break down or through" (53). Iyer describes the movement of airports as a kind movement-less state, but it also becomes a marker for Iyer's conception of a global soul where pace and speed are as much at issue as quantity. The pace of life as represented by airports affects people, "like Ted Turner [who] have actually become ill from touching down and taking off so often; but, in less diagnosable ways, all of us are being asked to handle difficult suspensions of the laws of Nature and Society when moving between competing worlds" (53).

More than Mere Taffy

One reviewer remarked that the "problem [with *The Global Soul*] is that the individual chapters give every appearance of having begun life as magazine assignments and then of having been pulled like taffy to enlarge their significance" ("Airports are for Sleeping"

par 6). Such criticism, however, fails to recognize the way in which individual chapters might fit into the larger "search for home" narrative of *The Global Soul*. Additionally, claims like this neglect the substantial changes Iyer has made to transform an article like "Where World's Collide" into a chapter like "The Airport." The metaphor of pulled taffy suggests that nothing has been added but air and puffed up significance. On the contrary, many of the differences between article and book chapter appear to be rhetorically savvy moves. As mentioned above, one major difference is the way Iyer enhanced the description and sense of his own materiality in "The Airport." Iyer also added scenes about experiences at other airports and discussions about the way that air travel, both materially and metaphorically, changes how one sees the world. Furthermore, even a cursory look at the differences between "Where Worlds Collide" and "The Airport" will show that these changes are not insubstantial.

The newcomers' view opening section of "Where World's Collide" and its catalog of LAX's variety continues for more than 700 of the article's 5600 words, so even when Iyer switches perspectives, pulls back, and comments on the role of airports in contemporary culture, the presentation of LAX as a place of abundance and confusion stays with us. By contrast, "The Airport" opens from Iyer's perspective, tying it both to his travels after losing his house and to his sense that "[m]any of my most vivid memories of growing up had come from those times when I'd say good-bye to my parents and get onto a jumbo jet" (41). Even when he describes other individuals in the chapter—like the moments mentioned earlier—the autobiographical frame filters those details. We are no longer asked to identify with the immigrants and tourists visiting LAX

for the first time by seeing what they might see. Instead, we must now see their lives and experiences through Iyer's life and reportage. These contrasting narrative structures suggest the ways in which narrative presence influences a reader's identification. But what of the other constituents of the rhetoric of presence? One way to answer this question is by turning to Alan Gross's supplement to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's version of presence as described in *The New Rhetoric*. Gross uses the terms foreground, background, space, and time to describe what he calls global presence. He explores the terms through an analysis of Vienna 1938, "an exhibit commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Anschluss, the Nazi take-over of Austria"(6). While Gross concerns himself with presence effects in the public sphere, Iyer manipulates the categories to create presence effects on an individual level. Where I differ from Gross is that I see presence as both a technique (something that we can point to within a particular text) and an effect (what readers take away from the experience of reading and identifying with the events and individuals within a text). As technique, presence can apply to the individual rhetorical strategies (*enargeia*, *topographia*, etc.) and moments of reference in a text (like the case from *The Island Within* where bear tracks equals the presence of a bear). Presence as effect begins with identification in the way that Hauser describes and then, ultimately, moves to some kind of persuasion (whether to action or to attitude).

Having said that, Gross's additional categories help us articulate both the rhetoric of presence and the rhetorical effects of presence. For example, one technique Iyer relies on in "Where Worlds Collide" is listing, from the seven named and 42 unnamed airport shuttles, to the languages spoken at the information booth (26 of them), to the naming of

cities (Sydney, Toronto, Singapore, Tokyo, Seoul, Bangkok), countries (England, El Salvador, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Mexico, Austria, Germany, Spain, Costa Rica), and "a bank of forty-six phones of every kind, with screens and buttons and translations, from which newcomers are calling direct to Bangalore or Baghdad" (53). Such lists clearly work as a form of amplification—as it does in Nelson's *The Island Within*—to suggest dizzying abundance; however, the listing also foregrounds (and makes present) abundance and the expense of the quotidian: airports as a locus of transportation. The lists, then, ask readers to see—in terms of Gross's "global presence"—airports, and LAX in particular as a symbol of an abundant world. What is often pushed to the background is that such abundance and variety of people and culture does not always equal harmony or understanding; names, and countries and cultures, are represented but not actually felt or lived. Again, material presence for Iyer is seen in terms of surface, so the lists amplify this sense of variety without depth. The presence effect, however, does change as Iyer revises and edits "Where Worlds Collide" to become "The Airport." As mentioned earlier, a more in-depth, autobiographical sense moves to the foreground in the book chapter. We enter the world of the airport not through the experience of tourists and immigrants, but through Iyer's extended recollection. This framing acts as a counter to the variety and confusion of the lists. Additionally, the framing of the entire book as an individual search for home tends to balance the generality and surface-only understanding that such lists foreground.

We can also see how Iyer manipulates time and space (using Gross's understanding of these terms as constituents of global presence) to develop a particular

understating of material presence in airports: "Time itself plays strange tricks around the airport, as we routinely wake up in Tokyo today and arrive in LA last night. Everyone's looking at his watch in departure lounges, but all the watches show different times" (61). Iyer later writes, "as my days at LAX began to stretch into weeks, and I felt myself sinking into a nether state that marks the amphibian, the geographical equivalent of jetlag" (76) and, "Many of the people who arrive at LAX, so full of bright expectations, never really leave the airport" (76). The manipulation of time here does not connect to historical time or time outside the narrative, but reminds readers or asks them to see airports and air travel as places where our perception of time changed. As the second quotation suggests, depth of material presence in the airport only intensifies this condition. Again, we can compare this to Nelson's text in which depth of material presence becomes linked to a greater, if still qualified, understanding of place. In Iyer's case, time and place get confused and are confusing, so that in another part of the chapter he writes,

> The defining paradox of the airport, though, is that it offers all these amenities to people who don't really want to be there, and tries to divert people whose only attention is on when they can get out.…You can swim in a rooftop pool in Miami, I had read, or play in a meta-miniairport in O'hare (complete with its own air-control towers and baggage claim areas)…or explore hiking trails in Kuala Lumpur. (57)

Airports, in Iyer's view, are rhetorical spaces; they ask temporary occupants to either forget about or ignore time while there or to make our stay in the "accommodating anonymous spaces" a substitute for experiences in the real, individualized world" (43). In short, Iyer argues that airports take us out of time and space and tend or try to erase the

places and times outside of them; however, he counters the atemporal and aspatial rhetoric of airports by ending the chapter with a personal story that reminds readers of the individuals within airports as well as specific places and times. Iyer describes a conversation with "my Ethiopian waitress" at the airport hotel who tells him that "'she missed [her home] bitterly,'" but the woman admits she "'can't go home…because they killed my family. Two years back. They killed my father; they killed my brother'" (77). This story reminds readers that even the "accommodating anonymous spaces" are filled with distinct, real individuals. It also connects to Iyer's opening burning house account of losing his home. Finally, however, it reminds us that many of the people who pass through or work in airports are not, like Iyer, placeless and privileged. Overall, "The Airport" indicates the balance of elements that Gross describes. At some moments, anonymity seems foregrounded at the expense of individual stories, but Iyer manages to seek out narratives—his own and others'—that keep these stories from being backgrounded and preventing the chapter and its discussion of airports from being merely, as one reviewer described, "over-charted territory for amateur sociologists" (Beckett, par 6).

The Rhetorical Space of Airports

If we return to Gregory Clark's *Rhetorical Landscapes in America,* we can see other reasons why the airport plays such a central role in *The Global Soul*. Drawing on Burke's expanded view of rhetoric, Clark writes, "the rhetorical symbols we encounter and exchange are *not limited to language*," and "the full range of symbols that constitute a

person's social and cultural experience have rhetorical functions" (3 emphasis added). For Clark, things and acts—as much as words—can be rhetorical. Using this frame, it makes sense that Iyer should include a chapter on airports and air travel in a book that focuses so much on globalism and its role in individual and cultural identity. Clark then moves from an analysis and interpretation of Burke's rhetoric to an articulation of *Rhetorical Landscapes'* underlying point, which is "that the rhetorical power of a national culture is wielded not only by public discourse, but also by public experiences. Both present a collective of people with shared symbols of a common identity and, in doing so, prompt those people to adopt that identity for themselves" (4). Clark goes on to write this: "[N]ational culture teaches Americans to experience certain places in their homeland rhetorically—to encounter for themselves those places as potent symbols of a concept of national community they are to claim as their own" (5). The key here is that our experience of place is often—but not always—shaped by rhetoric.

With a few comments to modify and explore Clark's definitions, we can return to Iyer's LAX. At their most basic, of course, airports are examples of Clark's "land," a term for him that is synonymous with place. In a larger, but equally basic, sense airports are merely intermediate points on the way from home to an encounter with something else: the other, the foreign, and the different. They are not usually part of tourist itineraries; they are merely spaces that lead to other spaces and places. Even so, these spaces ask something of those who travel through them. But what—to return to one of the central questions of this chapter—if one doesn't have a home from which to leave and, presumably, return?

Part of the answer comes in the way that Iyer manages his text to suggest that airports are in fact landscapes in Clark's sense and that they work in both discursive and material ways to form a common identity. In some ways, we can say that airports, particularly large international airports like LAX, are stops on a global tourist itinerary. Airports, then, function in much the same way as the Grand Canyon's interpretive features, like its visitors' center and informational plaques, shape the way visitors experience and identify with a common, American experience. Airports represent for "Global Soul" culture what the Grand Canyon does for American tourists. This is true of the common elements of airports, but also the specific ways that individuals experience them and the peculiarities of specific airports like LAX, Nerita, or Kuala Lumpur. This is why airports figure so prominently in *The Global Soul*. While they are often merely waypoints in a traveler's destination, they also represent travel, stand as a metaphor for the experience of travel, and—often—become the place we never really leave.

Moving from Material to Textual: The Problem of Translation

Authors like Nelson, Sanders, Ray, and others whose writing is deeply invested in recreating or transmitting their personal sense and understanding of a particular place face many of the same problems as travel writers like Iyer. All of them are still faced with the problem of transferring their experience into language in a way that will actually reach an audience. Iyer clearly understands this problem of communication. In an interview, he describes it this way:

> The larger problem I see with travel writing is…that you have had these life-changing experiences and have entered a whole different way of seeing the universe but it's not apprehensible to your friends in Iowa or in Evanston. And when you start talking about it, it is very hard for you to make your conversion experience as powerful to them as it was to you. And I am the same way. If either of you in this room had been to Uganda, to which I have never been, it would be hard for me to attend to your stories, whereas if you were talking to me about Japan, which I know well, I would be on the edge of my seat.
>
> And so, I think travel writing has a hard time appealing to people who haven't traveled and who don't see a book on place as a literary text in the way they would see another nonfiction book, and that's one of the hurdles that I don't know how we can surmount. But certainly I can understand the reader's skepticism. ("On Travel")

The problem, then, is to reach those readers who have not traveled. At the same time, travel writers are also seeking to reach people who've seen something of the world. Ultimately, however, Iyer comes down on the side of the everyday, untravelled individual and works to see and describes things from his or her perspective. In another interview, he suggests this:

> A travel writer is in some ways a professional amateur. One of the advantages he has is that he's not encumbered by an agenda and not weighed down by twenty years of studying a place, but can try to bring some of the freshness to it that any first-time visitor would have or want. ("Where Worlds Collude" 188)

What's fascinating about a comment like this is that it demonstrates Iyer's understanding of the very basic problem of travel to other countries and even to other parts of the United States. It also suggests that the nineteenth century romantic or picturesque travel and even the 18th century grand tour still hold great sway for tourists. Ultimately, however, Iyer's amateur status—despite his many forms of privilege—comes across in the prose. What

he offers in *The Global Soul* and other works, including his recently published *The Open Road*, is the sense that to be fully present in the world does not necessarily mean being fully present in any one place

> Magazines, and especially the "slick" magazines that safely tenured academics and high-minded literati sometimes scorn, offer a vast richness of opportunity to imaginative nonfiction writers—and therefore to imaginative nonfiction readers. These magazines get a bad rap. The sharp criticisms and easy condescension leveled against [magazines] are generally unconsidered, supercilious, blindered to the tricky relations between writer and audience, also to those between writer and creditors, and no more than about half accurate. Because they print on glossy paper, carry advertisements…and devote a portion of their pages to items and stories that might politely be called fatuous junk, magazines such as *Outside* are too often dismissed as intellectually or literarily negligible.
>
> —David Quammen, from *Wild Thoughts from Wild Places*

> [*The Quiet American*] asks every one of us what we want from a foreign place, and what we are planning to do with it. It points out that innocence and idealism can claim as many lives as the opposite, fearful cynicism.
> — Pico Iyer, from "The Disquieting Resonance of *The Quiet American*"

CHAPTER FOUR

Adventure Travel, Misadventure, and *Outside* Magazine

Somewhere between the poles of Pico Iyer and Richard Nelson stand writers like Tim Cahill and David Quammen, who find place important, but steer past claiming it as the overt, central concern of their work. Place is significant for these writers and both of them—along with a host of other popular writers whose work focuses in some way on nature, environment, the outdoors, or science—have chosen Montana as the place they call home.[30] In addition, both Cahill and Quammen demonstrate a preoccupation with language and action. This preoccupation takes many shapes, but in Cahill's case it usually surfaces in the form of an overtly self-conscious narrative voice. Cahill, like Iyer, is also well aware of his privileged position as traveler, adventurer, and potential agent of Western cultural imperialism, and his work exhibits an attention to the ways in which his

[30] Others include Rick Bass, novelist Ivan Doig, former *Outside* columnist Mark Jenkins, writer and critic William Kittredge, and writer-filmmaker Annick Smith.

physical presence and language influence other individuals, cultures and place. Additionally, Cahill brings a thoughtfulness to his often over-the top, attention-grabbing narrative style. Rich Miller, whose article "Constructing a Writer's Voice: Ethos, Tim Cahill, and the Jonestown Massacre" offers the most thoughtful critical engagement with Cahill's work, claims, "no treatment of Cahill's writing voice exists that employs a rhetorical approach, specifically an analysis of how Cahill creates a convincing ethos" (par 1). Miller's assertion is too generous. Despite Cahill's general popularity and the intellectual depth buried under an often madcap surface, critics have largely ignored his writing, failing to offer any kind of in-depth consideration of the ways in which Cahill understands and interacts with readers on a level beyond slapstick.

Instead, most discussion about Cahill's work appears as book reviews, author interviews, and his occasional appearance as a travel "expert."[31] When critics mention Cahill's work beyond these outlets, they usually refer to it only in passing or connect it to thematically and stylistically similar work. Additionally, critics who do discuss Cahill's writing tend to take a negative view of it. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan mention "the buffoonery of Cahill and O'Hanlon" (6), and later link Cahill's work to Redmond O'Hanlon and the traditions of "adventurer-hero" and ""would-be hero of the gung ho type" (76-7). Holland and Huggan offer a good sketch of Cahill's style and themes, but include this in an endnote, further signaling his second-tier status. Such placement also suggests that, unlike O'Hanlon's work, a collection like Cahill's *Jaguars Ripped My*

[31] Cahill has appeared on programs like National Public Radio's Talk *of the Nation*.

Flesh is simply surface, no more than "knockabout farce" without O'Hanlon's ecological depth (78). Cahill receives more attention in *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, where Lisle offers a two-page discussion of *Road Fever* as one example of "hyper-masculine" work in which "travel writers regain the power to be first, to be tough, to be adventurous in the face of a world already discovered and domesticated" (95). For Lisle, *Road Fever* also "illustrates how appropriate manliness is the *only requirement* for the modern adventure" (98, emphasis added). Lisle's earlier article, "Gender at a Distance," argues a similar point, adding a reference to Judith Butler's work in reference to the "competitive masculinity" in travelogues written by men and women (73). These three works represent the standard, unflattering critical treatment of Cahill's writing. To be sure, there are other articles and books that mention Cahill's work, but most of these simply mention his name or writing (Martineau, Davis and Miller, Kottler, Aucoin), or make a passing, if thoughtful point about the specific narrative detail of an article (McPartland, C. Williams) before moving on to other writers and points.

To be fair to these critics, their diminution of Cahill's work may signal nothing more than the fact that a book like *Lost in My Own Backyard* or an article like "The Shame of Escobilla" falls outside their particular scholarly preoccupation. As mentioned above, Holland, Huggan, and Lisle pursue a singular focus when discussing and analyzing Cahill's writing: a kind of over-the-top, cartoon-like quest for masculine adventure. Such a focus fails to acknowledge the richness and variety in Cahill's writing as well as his narrative and critical self-awareness. During an interview promoting *Hold the Enlightenment*, Howard Berkes asks about the issue:

> The idea of testosterone-infused writing came up at a writers' conference in Salt Lake City recently where there were some, you know, kind of complaints about the writing that—you weren't named, but there were references to modern outdoor magazines, such as the one you write for, *Outside*, in which there were complaints about adrenaline and testosterone-driven writing that's lacking in substance. Do you have a response to that?

Cahill responds:

> In large part, I agree exactly with—entirely, entirely too much of what we read in the outdoor and adventure-type magazines are what I would call gratuitous chest-thumping. And it doesn't particularly make for a good story, especially if you are a testosterone-infused, highly macho, highly competent, physical guy. Where's the drama in that? (Berkis)

Cahill goes on, contrasting his regular person ethos with the adventurous "Superman" and underscores the view that he does not see himself as part of the "testosterone-driven" camp. Instead, Cahill makes clear that the predominant pattern of his writing is not masculinist triumph, but failure and disaster. He ties this pattern not to politics or gender, but to effective narrative: "If something doesn't go wrong you don't have much to write about," he says, "If you go to an idyllic resort and everybody's very nice to you and you lie on the beach, what is there to write about? What you write about are obstacles and overcoming obstacles" (Berkis).

True, a touch of conquest and masculinity—in the 'and I've lived to tell the tale' sense—tracks through Cahill's writing, but more often than not, this is simply a byproduct or trace in the narrative of his travels and adventures, not an aspect that he explicitly celebrates. In "The Book on Survival" for instance, Cahill recounts two climbers' survival story and pairs it with his own. Both stories are braided with a

discussion of advice offered in various survival handbooks. The story's twist is that the climbers survive not by following advice in their guide, which had already let them down, but like this: "'It was so hard to start the fire,' Angus said later, 'so we started ripping out the pages and it started right up.' Searchers spotted the flaming survival book, and the two climbers were evacuated by helicopter" (15). Bravado does not save the men. Frustration saves them. Cahill draws readers' attention to the patterns of frustration, luck, and failure in his narratives by opening *Jaguars Ripped My Flesh* with the section "Tracking Snipe" that contains "The Book on Survival" and three other pieces highlighting the comical and foolish side of adventure. Such a humorous, self-aware opening section is only one portion of Cahill's varied approach to narrative that critics like Holland, Huggan, and Lisle ignore.

Moving Past the Masculine

What's hopeful, however, is that several of the critical works mentioned above—even though they do not provide extended analyses of Cahill's work—offer useful ways to explore the depth of his narrative and rhetorical strategies. Aucoin's focus on narrative journalism's self-presentation, in particular, offers one helpful starting point. When added to Miller's in-depth discussion of "In the Valley of the Shadow of Death," the two articles develop a foundation upon which we can build a richer criticism of Cahill's work. Even with these constructive critical perspectives, the overall negative assessment of Cahill's work carries the day. The Quammen epigraph suggests an even deeper critical

prejudice against many of these writers, particularly those who've developed their craft and come to public attention through the pages of *Outside* and similar publications.

I have no general quarrels with postcolonial and feminist treatments of nature and travel writing. Work by Lisle, Pratt, Holland and Huggan, Spurr, Sheller, and Clark is valuable because it draws attention to the ways in which many such texts perpetuate Western, masculinist, and consumerist forms of thought, language use, and action. Even so, it is clear that at least some nature and travel writing is aware of the ways the genres—broadly speaking—perpetuate these problems. Some nature and travel writing also works against these concerns and proposes alternative modes of thought, language use, and action. Because of this, critics should also be asking 'what else are these texts doing,' 'how are they responding to additional, as-yet-unexplored exigencies,' and 'to what extent can genres that are part of popular culture act against the dominant trends of that culture?'

This is where Quammen's sense that much of the writing in magazines like *Outside* is undervalued and his point that "magazines, like newspapers, should be judged by the best and most substantial of what they offer" is helpful and rhetorically important (15). Quammen clearly includes his own writing in the "best and most substantial" category; however, this group would likely include writers like Sebastian Junger, Peter Matthiessen, Jon Krakauer, Jane Smiley, Susan Orlean, and Gretel Ehrlich. While many of these writers first made their literary names beyond *Outside*, Krakauer and Junger's initial popularity came by means of articles originally published in the magazine. Based on his contribution to the debate after the publication of "Death of an Innocent" (the

article that was to become *Into the Wild*), as well his response following publication of *Into the Wild* and *Into Thin Air*, it is clear that part of Krakauer's reason for pursuing these stories was to investigate the costs—individual, cultural, and natural—of such adventure. The same could be said of the other writers mentioned above. Each of them is concerned with the ways their stories, through the rhetoric of presence and other means, persuade readers to think and act.

The second feature of note in Quammen's introduction is his movement from direct address early on—"my purpose at the moment is more modest: to welcome you to this book of ruminations" (12), "I invite you to jump around, dipping into the various sections as your tastes or your mood might dictate" (14)—to the later, unacknowledged moments—quoted above and in the epigraph—where he enlists the reader as ally. We might describe his underlying argument like this: 'while those "tenured academics and high-minded literati" might not appreciate the writing in *Outside* and other like-minded magazines, you and I know better. Such magazines include work that is both socially aware and of high literary quality.' Even if readers happens to belong to one or the other of the former groups, Quammen asks them to become "reader[s] of imaginative nonfiction" (15), and a critic of the critics.

Despite this silent rhetorical maneuver, Quammen's goal is not simply to attack those who have attacked him. In fact, Holland and Huggan, so critical of Cahill's style, single out Quammen for the way he "is able to fend off the argument that seems to make *him*, and *his* work, vulnerable: that [he is] both exploiting the current vogue for cautionary parables of depletion at a time when rarity and extinction have themselves

become consumer items" (188 authors' emphasis). Speaking about *The Song of the Dodo*, Holland and Huggan argue that Quammen is a rare writer who develops "escapades [that] are sensational enough to capture the interest of even the most distracted readers without compromising the intellectual rigor of his broader evolutionist argument," a writer who "is also aware of the pitfalls surrounding the rhetoric of disappearance" (188), and, grouped with Barry Lopez and Peter Matthiessen, a writer who is "also alert to the dangers of reifying the wonder of nature" (195). This danger may exist in any imaginative work that exhibits a strong sense of place. Nature and travel writing, however, are particularly susceptible because of the ways in which the rhetoric of presence—emphasizing rarity, uniqueness, or other special qualities—may prompt readers to want to see the place and cultures described for themselves. In short, these genres, often act as allies to consumer culture.

Holland and Huggan underscore this point when they describe "a consumer-oriented culture that seeks belatedly to rescue, advertise, and then sell the very resources that its own expansionist imperatives have helped to place at risk" (195). It is not difficult to see magazines like *Outside, Canoe & Kayak,* or *National Geographic Traveler* as part of the machinery of such a culture. Quammen is clearly aware of such criticism and his tacit role in perpetuating the Western, consumerist culture of which Holland, Huggan, and others speak. Even so, he takes a rhetorically more effective position in the introduction to *Wild Thoughts from Wild Places* and elsewhere. Instead of simply acknowledging the overall detrimental impact *Outside* has on places and culture in the

United States and elsewhere, Quammen argues for the value of continuing to publish in such magazines. In an email to Scott Slovic, Quammen writes:

> [A]mong the firmest of my professional convictions is that a writer who wants to influence how humans interact with landscape and nature should strive to reach as large an audience as possible and NOT preach to the converted. That means, for me, flavoring my work with entertainment-value, wrapping my convictions subversively within packages that might amuse and engage a large unconverted audience, and placing my work whenever possible in publications that reach the great unwashed. (qtd in Slovic viii, author's emphasis)

In the first sentence, Quammen describes his intended rhetorical effect as more than simple description or evocation of places and parts of nature. He wants to change readers' minds. Also clear in the email is Quammen's desire to reach past the narrow field of already interested readers. The group he invokes here includes members of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, but we can easily imagine those "unconverted," but critical of Quammen's work or the concerns of nature-influenced travel writing or nature writing more generally. The email also addresses the question of style: the most direct bridge back to Cahill's work. Texts written to change people's minds about landscape need not borrow from the jeremiad or other, equally apocalyptic, genres. Instead, Quammen is interested in reaching large audiences by writing for magazines like *Outside* and employing what he describes as rhetorical subversion masked by humor and "entertainment-value." After quoting from Quammen's email, Slovic wonders why he should fault Quammen's strategy: "How could I justify luring David away from devoting his energies to writing sharp-eyed, learned book reviews and articles for the immense audiences of the *New York Times* and *Outside*? (ix). Slovic also

concedes that the audience, even for a successful nature- and environment-related press like Milkweed Editions, is many times smaller than the one accessible to Quammen.[32] Even if there is a "social efficacy [to the] thoughts and words of ASLE members and other like-minded individuals," Slovic admits, "we have indirect access, at best, to 'the great unwashed'" (ix).

Complications of the Commercial

Quammen's email expresses a sentiment shared by Tim Cahill. One way to explain the difference in attention to and critical assessment of Quammen and Cahill is how Cahill the writer develops Tim Cahill the character as a combination of bumbling fool and ordinary, average guy. On the surface, the bumbling fool is simply a technique to engage readers and keep them reading: the low comic style or a version of Menippean satire. This accords with Holland and Huggan's suggestions that "[t]he impulse to trivialize is behind much contemporary travel writing," travel writers often "make light of their misadventures [as] a useful alibi for their cultural gaffes," and such trivialization "affords a reminder that their often dubious pronouncements about people and cultures [and nature] are only the opinions of an enthusiastic amateur" (6). In the case of travel or nature writing with designs on the reader beyond understanding description or accessing a guidebook's where to eat-sleep-shop and what to do-see pleasantries, humor does more

[32] The email and Slovic meditation were prompted by a request for Quammen to contribute a manuscript for Milkweed's Credo Series. Milkweed describes the project, which currently has ten volumes, like this: "Books in the Credo series explore the essential goals, concerns, and practices of contemporary American writers whose work emphasizes the natural world and human community" (Daniel, back cover).

than remind us of the writer's fallibility. "Humor in popular science writing," Michael Bryson argues, "is a stimulating additive—the power of Stephen Jay Gould's writing is certainly enhanced by his ability to make us chuckle in the midst of a detailed argument or explanation" (67).

In Quammen's case, humor punctuates both technical explanations and narrative moments like this one from a trip to Australia to see the tiger snake: "But my memory for biogeographical minutiae has failed me and I can't recall whether *N. scutatus* made it across that Pleistocene land bridge. If so, gulp, maybe the naming of Tiger Creek has nothing to do with *thylacines* [the Tasmanian Tiger]" (*Dodo* 302). While this moment is not belly-laugh funny, it is typical of the modest humorous pauses Quammen uses to remind readers of his fallibility and give us room to breathe in between scientific explanations. Writers like Cahill and Bill Bryson use fewer of these soft humor pauses. More often, they rely on over-the-top humor, bad puns, and deliberate silliness. By his own admission, both the antics of a bumbling fool and the regular Joe or Jane strategy are deliberate authorial and editorial choices, connected to the founding of *Outside* magazine in the late 1970s:

> *Outside*, as I saw the new magazine, should be in the business of giving people back their dreams. The tough assignments would go to writers, not adventurers. "We don't want supermen and -women," I argued. "We want physically ordinary folks. The reader should think, 'Hey, if this clown can do it, so can I.' If the writer's sort of incompetent and easily frightened, all the better." (*Jaguars* 6)

Even a passage like this shows the self-mocking humor that permeates Cahill's writing. Cahill's language also suggests an awareness of Lunsford and Ede's addressed and

invoked audiences. The former might be readers of the "larger-than-life contrivances of an artfully absurd nature," the same kind of articles and stories Cahill admits to reading in his youth (*Jaguars* 1). His own work, for example, shows an attentiveness to the tradition of tall travel tales and adventurous exaggeration (from Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* to Mark Twain's *Following the Equator*, Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*, or the over-the-top adventure stories Cahill disparages, but still enjoys). Even the titles of his collections and articles take advantage of this sensationalist heritage: *Jaguars Ripped My Flesh*, *A Wolverine is Eating My Leg*, and *Pecked to Death by Ducks*. The second title simultaneously draws on and sends up the ethos-building move of present-tense narration. As Cahill reminds us, "many of the animal attack stories [in the adventure magazines of the fifties] happen *now*, as you read them, right here in the present tense" (*Jaguars* 4 author emphasis).

Cahill's invoked audience is based on the editorial vision for the new magazine.[33] The people he wants as readers are not Richard Branson types eager to add to their life list of extreme adventures, exotic exploits, and fastest-highest-longest records. Instead, he calls forth sensible, ordinary people who can imagine taking the journey because the writer clearly has—imagining the thoughts of such a reader—"less sense than I do or is more physically inept than I am." Whatever critics might say about *Outside*'s overall cultural impact, it is clear that Cahill is every bit as thoughtful and self aware about his

[33] Ede and Lunsford use "'invoked' audience [to refer] to the audience called up or imagined by the writer" (156 footnote).

writing, the influence of his presence on the cultures and places he visits, and the rhetorical effects of his work as Quammen.

Being There Without Us or Calling to the Horde: Finding a Balance

The remainder of this chapter focuses on two connected issues. First, it explores the ways that the rhetoric of presence within a text can add dimension to and facilitate the recreation of material presence. As Iyer writes, the magic of Cahill's prose is that he "so excel[s] at passing on [his] excitement about the road that we will travel anywhere with [him]" ("Introduction" xxiii). This is the case not only for Cahill, but also for writers like Bryson and O'Hanlon. All of them use humor and exaggeration as recurrent strategies in their narratives. In addition, however, these narratives and their narrators can also be amazingly self-conscious, including thoughtful, passages that reflect on the meaning of the adventures they have and the places and people they encounter. Part of this chapter examines such reflective moments to see how they acknowledge or address the kinds of imperialist language use Clark, Holland, Huggan, Lisle, Pratt, and Spurr discuss in their work. That is, how do these texts explain the problems associated with the material presence of their authors? Is, for example, Cahill simply a latter day version of the conquering, imperialist adventurer of previous centuries, or does his writing move beyond such models?

Near the end of this chapter, I also examine *Outside* magazine's ongoing, troubling, and schizophrenic relationship with the natural world. On the one hand, the magazine has a history of publishing excellent, thoughtful work by writers like Cahill,

Matthiessen, and Edward Abbey. It has also won—as founder and publisher Larry Burke never fails to mention when interviewed—three *National Magazine Association* awards for general excellence: an as-yet-unbeaten record. On the other hand, like most commercially successful publications, the magazine has succumbed to advertisers' real and perceived pressure to dictate the scope of editorial content. Given the on-going ethos of care and respect that *Outside* wants to cultivate, it is more troubling that the advertising and much of the editorial content tends to work against the thoughtful, meaningful attitudes toward place that writers like Nelson, Iyer, and longtime *Outside* contributors like Cahill, Quammen, and Mark Jenkins describe in their work. Like most commercial publication, *Outside* tends to fetishize the expedition gear, the places mentioned in advertisements, and the places described in editorial content. This is not to say that the writers and editors of the magazine have any long-standing animosity toward the natural world. On the contrary, more than most high-circulation publications, *Outside* has deliberately cultivated an ethos of care and attentiveness toward the natural world that other commercial publications simply ignore or treat solely as a marketing vogue.[34]

Perhaps the overarching question about a magazine like *Outside* is to what extent do the messages of individual articles and particular writers get through or past the cumulative rhetorical effects of features, columns, staff-written items like departments and briefs, photography, and the magazine's design of the magazine? These are, after all,

[34] Some of these include *Vanity Fair*, May 2006, 2007, and 2008; *Elle,* May 2008; *Fortune*, April 2, 2007; *Sports Illustrated*, March 7, 2007. Last year, *Columbia Journalism Review* published the round up, "A Guide Through the Jungle of Green Issue" (Brainard).

the elements that led to the awards for general excellence.[35] We can also ask a related question: How does the placement and size of advertisements and choice of advertisers contribute to the magazine's rhetorical effect? One way to critique the development and current status and mixed messages of *Outside* is to place it against Cahill's writing and the much longer tradition of narratives of nature and adventure as imperial exploration and macho grandstanding that Cahill describes. We could consider the writing's rhetoric of presence in terms of feminist critiques of travel and travel writing. What, for example, is feminine and what is masculine in Cahill's writing and in the overall rhetorical effect of *Outside* magazine? We could also examine the role and use of ethics in framing the writer/narrator's presence both within the narrative and in the material spaces he or she describes. That is, we can look to introductions to books and book-length collection, the introductions to article-length works, and the framing and positioning of the author within a work. Any of these questions should return to the individual writer's sense and presentation of his or her work, so we should ask, finally, in what ways does the writer's ethos and use of the rhetoric of presence compete with or complement the overall ethos of *Outside* magazine.

The Ethics of Personal Narrative

While Richard Nelson's work represents the embodied ethic of bioregionalism and Pico Iyer's books encourage readers to practice a more thoughtful mode of travel (one that's

[35] According to the American Society of Magazine Editors, judges base their decision on "the effectiveness with which writing, reporting, editing and design all come together to command readers' attention and fulfill the magazine's unique editorial mission" ("Category Definitions").

aware of the promise, possibility, and problems, of cross-cultural interaction) as part of what we can call a global soul ethic, Sebastian Junger's foreword to *The Perfect Storm* offers explicit consideration of narrative and ethics:

> On the one hand, I wanted to write a completely factual book that would stand on its own as a piece of journalism. On the other hand, I didn't want the narrative to asphyxiate under a mass of technical detail and conjecture. I toyed with the idea of fictionalizing minor parts of the story—conversations, personal thoughts, day-to-day routines—to make it more readable but that risked diminishing the value of whatever facts I *was* able to determine. In the end I wound up sticking strictly to the facts, but in as wide-ranging a way as possible. If I didn't know exactly what happened about the doomed boat, for example, I would interview people who had been through similar situations, and survived. Their experiences, I felt, would provide a fairly good description of what the six men on the *Andrea Gale* had gone through, and said, and perhaps even felt. (xi author's emphasis)

This section is important for the way it highlights an undercurrent of my dissertation. While much of what I discuss could be examined through a narratological lens, I am more interested in the ways that discussions emerge from practitioners of journalism and creative nonfiction and how discussions of their methodology and rhetorical practice might inform how we teach and discuss such things in a writing classes. From this perspective, Junger's foreword is important because of the way he addresses readers' potential concerns from the perspective of thoughtful, effective, and responsible journalism.

After the passage quoted above, Junger outlines the way he uses quotations from interviews, details based on the "recollection" of others, and additional forms of research. All of this allows Junger to explain his rhetorical choices and how they influence the

development and style of the narrative, but the preface also suggests something of his process and the ethics involved in re-creating, and even retelling, events. Readers also encounter this kind of backgrounding and attention to truthfulness in Nelson's *The Island Within.* In Junger's case, the result is not a classic introduction, but represents a twinned ethical impulse. The first half connects to a version of presence that O'Loughlin describes. In this case, however, the eyewitness authority is not established for the writer, but the "people who had been through similar situations, and survived." In terms of presence, these individuals become a proxy both for the men who died on the *Andrea Gale* and Junger as author/journalist.

The second half of Junger's ethical impulse connects to what I call the James Frey effect (even through *The Perfect Storm* pre-dates Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* by eight years), which relates to the complicated conflict over creative nonfiction's truthfulness. One part of this struggle involves authors taking narrative liberties with their work by fabricating details (like Frey) and being called out for it. Another part of the conflict involves writers, editors, writing instructors, and others arguing for particular positions related to facts, truth, veracity, and truthfulness in creative nonfiction. In many ways, it is a debate that overlooks or ignores the claims of postmodern theorists in favor of a discussion of values, ethics, and what it means to be a member of a discourse community. As suggested already, Junger positions his narrative and asks readers to read *The Perfect Storm* within the context of narrative or literary journalism. Aware of a general public mistrust of journalism's genres, he is careful to frame his narrative in a way that preempts reader objections. The review of Frey's troubled storytelling history that attended the

launch of his novel *Bright Shiny Morning* and a recent *Boston Globe* article of the narrative liberties Ben Mezrich may have taken with his book, *Bringing Down the House*, are only two examples that suggest this debate and Junger's concerns are far from academic. "Instead of describing events as they happened," reporter Drake Bennett writes, "Mezrich appears to have worked more as a collage artist, drawing some facts from interviews, inventing certain others, and then recombining these into novel scenes that didn't happen and characters who never lived." The reporter also interviews Roy Peter Clark (Senior Scholar at the Poynter Institute and someone who often writes about the ethics of narrative nonfiction), narrative journalist Gay Talese (who calls such fabrications "unacceptable [and] dishonest"), and Sebastian Junger (for him, "[n]onfiction is reporting the world as it is, and when you combine characters and change chronology, that's not the world as it is; that's something else.")

Junger's position, as mentioned in the *Boston Globe* article and elsewhere, is to remain true "to the facts" and prepare readers for the ways in which his narrative moves beyond retelling the actual, material story of the men. When he does stray from the specific facts of the *Andrea Gale* narrative—imagining the power of the waves and the crewmembers' eventual drowning—the foreword and the structure of the narrative prepares readers for a substitution of the "similar situations."

Jon Krakauer's introductions to *Into the Wild* and *Into Thin Air* offer additional examples of this impulse. We can see these books as bridges linking the journalist-observer positioning and ethos building of someone like Junger to the ordinary guy persona Cahill describes. Krakauer calls *Into the Wild's* opening section an author's note

not an introduction, and while such a difference may seem trivial, I argue that the label encourages readers to develop a more familiar relationship with the writer. Such familiarity and identification operates closer to the persona that Cahill creates than the 'sticking to the facts' moment of Junger's preface. Furthermore, in both *Into the Wild* and *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer appeals to a sense of urgency, mentioning in reference to the original *Outside* magazine articles that he was "working on a tight deadline" (*Wild* ii), and "my deadline had been unforgiving" (*Air* xvi). This ethos-building move suggests, at its most basic, that Krakauer could only do so much, explore so much, write so much, research so much, and evokes the incompleteness of the articles. It's obviously also a moment of reflection. Mid-sentence, however, Krakauer's urgency turns to fixation as he writes, "my fascination with McCandless remained long after that issue of *Outside* was replaced on the newsstands by more current journalistic fare" (ii). The sentence may end with the overwritten flourish, "more current journalistic fare" instead of a phrase like "working on a tight deadline." In a small way, however, we can also see passages like these as outward-looking moments and indictments of (*Outside*) magazine readers, looking for the most recent stories and the latest gear reviews and moving on in a way the Krakauer himself was not prepared to do.

This suggests a personal turn, moving from reportage to individual involvement and the desire to slow down in a way that the market realities of magazine publishing do not allow. The move is also a writerly one, a way to signal an interest in digging deeper than even a 9000-word feature can go. In his next sentence, Krakauer reveals his specific interest in McCandless: "I was haunted by the particulars of the boy's starvation and by

vague, unsettling parallels between events in his life and those in my own" (ii). Krakauer mentions his interest, but then equates with his use of "and" the fact- and detail-based curiosity with his personal connection. That is, Krakauer is "haunted" by both a vocational and personal interest in McCandless' story. The sentence that follows suggests a return to simple description of "more than a year" of in-depth reporting and investigation, but then ends by blurring the vocational and personal in its final phrase "an interest that bordered on obsession" (ii). Even before beginning McCandless' story, then, readers have a sense that Krakauer will merge reportorial and personal. At the end of the paragraph—after describing many "larger subjects" of reflection—Krakauer writes, "The result of this meandering inquiry is the book now before you" (ii). Up to this point, Krakauer has used the singular first person many times (to describe the nature of the original magazine article, his research process, and his personal involvement in McCandless' story), but this is the first moment of direct address. The phrasing here suggests that readers should consider the book not simply as journalism, analysis, autobiography, or Montaignian meditation but as a hybrid of all of the above.

To underscore his point that readers should approach the book this way, Krakauer begins his next paragraph with an apology: "I won't claim to be an impartial biographer" (ii). He does not stop there. Instead of merely priming readers for a blend of reportage, reflection, analysis, and autobiography with the details of composition, Krakauer underscores the specific nature of his work and of biography in general. Krakauer is not a literary critic or rhetorician, so he doesn't make the claim that no biography can be impartial. Instead, he sticks to the situatedness of his particular book by recognizing and

addressing the exigence of personal involvement in the primary subject of his story. Krakauer continues:

> McCandless's strange tale struck a personal note that made a dispassionate rendering of the tragedy impossible. Through most of the book, I have tried—and largely succeeded, I think—to minimize my authorial presence. But let the reader be warned: I interrupt McCandless's story with fragments of narrative drawn from my own youth. I do so in the hope that my experience will throw some oblique light on the enigma of Chris McCandless. (ii)

This suggests a developing ethical contract between Krakauer and readers. First, the passage suggests that Krakauer's conception of biography and journalism is that they should be "dispassionate" and include minimal "authorial presence." The exigence of the subject, the "strange tale," makes this standard form impossible; however, Krakauer amplifies his point in the second sentence by suggesting the de-emphasis of the personal in the book. He then shifts back to direct address. Finally, the passage includes Krakauer's apology for including the autobiographical with the biographical "in the hope" that readers might gain more from the combination than by a report of the details of McCandless's story. The strategy is similar to the way Junger introduces *The Perfect Storm*, concerned that he maintain principles of ethical journalism, but also aware that a mere retelling of the events might not offer a compelling narrative.

This shuttling between justification and apology gives way to two paragraphs that blend description and analysis. The final paragraph of the author's note begins with a report about the mail received in response to the original *Outside* article. This is a way to recognize another exigence: the responses of readers to the details of McCandless's story and the report of them in the original article. In this way, Krakauer's book becomes a

means to respond to the tone and content of the letters as much as a way to make up for the haste of reporting "on a tight deadline." The last sentence of the author's note negotiates between readers of the original article and readers of *Into The Wild* by putting Krakauer in the middle: "My convictions should be apparent soon enough, but I will leave to readers to form his or her own opinion of Chris McCandless" (iii). The direct address here downplays the authorial presence. Krakauer seems to be saying that even though readers will come to understand his position on McCandless, this is less important that the view that readers come to by reading the book. This final statement suggests that far from distracting readers, the inclusion of Krakauer's personal narrative and views (explicit or implicit) act as techniques for helping readers come to their own view.

Like Junger, using accounts of people in similar situations to the men aboard the *Andrea Gale* as a means of making their tragedy more present for readers, Krakauer includes himself as an example of someone in similar situation to McCandless. His presence in *Into the Wild*—from his description of youthful enthusiasm to accounts of potentially deadly climbing mistakes— becomes the book's representative anecdote, the vehicle through which readers identify with McCandless and his situation. The risk in including such moments is that readers end up identifying with neither Krakauer nor McCandless. The reward—in terms of presence—is that using first-hand experience can magnify identification and increase the narrative veracity, in the same way that the writers O'Loughlin describes verify their experiences or that Nelson reminds readers of his deep, personal knowledge of his island. Like O'Loughlin's eighteenth century writers, Nelson, and Iyer, Krakauer suggests that presence within a place—seeing and knowing

the places McCandless visited—is paramount to telling his story. Additionally, as is the case with Cahill's writing, what draws readers through the narrative is the sense that Krakauer is not an extraordinary person except in his passion: "If something captured my undisciplined imagination," he writes, "I pursued it with a zeal bordering on obsession, and from the age of seventeen until my late twenties that something was mountain climbing" (134). Krakauer ends his embedded narrative of climbing Devil's Thumb by emphasizing his ordinariness:

> Less than a month after sitting on the summit of the Thumb [a moment he describes with everyday details and language instead of reaching for words suggesting the sublime], I was back in Boulder, nailing up siding on the Spruce Street Townhouses, the same condos I'd been framing when I left for Alaska. I got a raise, to four bucks an hour, and at the end of the summer moved out of the job-site trailer to a cheap studio apartment west of the downtown mall. (155)

In the end, the ordinary, not the imperial, all knowing, or extraordinary frames Krakauer's story. Moments like this work to reinforce the regular, workaday ethos, one tinged with passion, developed in the author's note.

Ethos of the Everyday: Tim Cahill's Extraordinarily Ordinary Adventure

By presenting himself as modest, Krakauer wants readers to identify with him as a regular person. Cahill, like Krakauer and Quammen, wants to create a community of writer and readers. As mentioned earlier, Cahill tells the story of how he wanted *Outside* magazine to publish articles celebrating the stories of "physically ordinary folks" (*Jaguars* 6), even if these ordinary people documented extraordinary adventures. What

makes his narratives compelling is the way he cultivates the presence of a persona that blends ordinary guy and bumbling fool. In some ways, this persona is an attack on and satire of language used by the all-knowing, imperialist master of landscape, the kind of rhetoric critiqued by Pratt and Spurr.

One characteristic example of the self-deprecating rhetoric occurs in the introduction to Cahill's "The Search for the Caspian Tiger" "I was sitting in the Owl," he writes, "a small bar in a small town in Montana, when I was lifted bodily from the stool—no small feat—and kissed exuberantly on both cheeks. "'Doctor C,' Tommy the Turk said by way of greeting" (11). This opening describes the matter-of-fact and everyday. Cahill then highlights his own ordinariness by focusing on the prestige of his friend Thomas Goltz and describing the upcoming trip he's to take: "We toasted Tommy's safe arrival back in Montana," Cahill continues,

> and discussed the idea of searching for the ghost tiger. As I recall, this involved many toasts. The next morning I woke up with some fuzzy recollection about an agreement to go to Turkey and search for the Caspian tiger with Tommy the Turk, a guy famous for covering wars. Was this a good idea? Would we get shot at? And what the hell did I know about tigers? (11)

In these opening scenes, Cahill demonstrates both parts of his narrative persona. First, he presents readers with Cahill the small-town citizen and average guy, willing to celebrate the work of one of his friends over his own. The next rhetorical turn has Cahill presenting, much like Quammen, his foolish side, suggesting his role in the expedition was more the result of drunken promises than clearheaded thinking or deep biological and geographical knowledge.

Irony, Received Wisdom, and the Presence of the Practical

In "The Book on Survival," an essay mentioned earlier in this chapter, Cahill presses down on the macho history of exploration and adventure narratives and the guides that offer seemingly countless ways to survive in an equally countless number of situations. Before this, and the humorous punch line I have already revealed, Cahill closes a two paragraph narrative account of how those two climbers come to be stranded in the wilderness with a moment of identification: "The temptation to 'go for it' must have been great. The idea of shivering through fifteen hours or more of below-freezing temperatures generates a sense of anxiety that, in its effects, is sometimes indistinguishable from pure panic" (11). After a section break, Cahill picks up with a first-person reflection of ethos-building and identification: "I've felt it often enough myself: this unhealthy urge to push on past the safety point rather than bivouac in uncomfortable circumstances" (11). What's striking about this section beginning is how Cahill frames a reflection by using past tense but captures an at-the-moment feeling by using "this." Such a deictic marker reminds readers of the climbers' predicament and suggests an ongoing, present tense sense of adventure: adventure often means getting into and safely out of situations like the one Cahill describes. The rhetoric of presence in this article refers to moments like this passage that highlight the ever-present risks of such adventures. In addition, the article underscores the idea that luck, frustration, or clear thinking (not bravado), are what could save you in dangerous situations.

Before revealing the punch line, Cahill underscores the difference between clear thinking guides and examples of the impractical, potentially reckless advice from other

survival manuals. “Emotionally, “he writes, “I like the books that foster personal wilderness survival fantasies. Generally, my light plane goes down in the Amazon or Alaska…I’m seldom seriously injured in the crash, but with my knowledge of wilderness survival lore, it’s my job to save the lives of at least six people” (14). Here, Cahill demonstrates his point without having to tell us. By the time we get to the final scene—the climbers’ burning of the survival manual—we are led, humorously, to the conclusion that the challenges in the wilderness we need, if any, “ought to be thought out and self-imposed, not thrust upon one by circumstances” (13). “The Book on Survival” is mostly comic relief for the sake of downplaying Cahill’s point that the best survival skills are not necessarily learned from Discovery Channel programs like *Survivorman* or *Man Versus Wild* or books in the *Worst Case Scenario* series. In this case, foolishness is treating “wilderness survival fantasies” as if they were actual situations.

Why Not to Travel: An Anti-Adventure

Cahill makes this soft-sell point in a short work. By contrast, Cahill’s longer works demonstrate his ability to move between registers. Sometimes he uses seriousness, sometimes he relies on humor, but we also get a rich sense of Cahill as a situated presence. “The Lost World” provides one good example of this combination of techniques. The article also sends up the ‘great explorers’ tradition and shows the potentially deadly consequences of following in Cahill’s footsteps, discouraging readers to visit the places *Outside* magazine celebrates.

While the title refers to an actual location stretching across parts of Venezuela, Guyana, Brazil, and Columbia, Cahill relies on the fantastic resonance of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1912 novel. In case readers miss the connection, Cahill reminds us: "Unexplored until shortly before the turn of the century, this is the area that inspired Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to write *The Lost World*—and his fantasy, in turn, was so compelling that it gave the area its name" (44). Cahill, however, delays this explication, letting the fantastic resonance hang over his opening scenes. The opening section makes the article an excellent example of how Cahill develops the rhetoric of presence and how he attends to the way readers perceive the events he describes. Instead of using a first-person perspective, Cahill opens like this: "To understand what happened, you have to see it the way the soldiers did" (39). This phrasing draws attention away from Cahill as the dominant presence in the narrative and focuses our attention on the acts of reading and witnessing. Instead of drawing readers in using his perspective, Cahill asks us to "see it" for ourselves. This technique suggests another way in which identification is linked to the rhetoric of presence. The narrative proceeds in past tense, third-person perspective:

> What they saw on the night of the full moon was undeniably ominous. Two Land Cruisers pulled up side by side on the bridge, bright lights glaring. Five men, shadowy figures behind headlights, clambered out onto the bridge. The soldiers leveled their weapons and trained a spotlight on the car. (39)

Cahill inflects the scene with his knowledge of the context, and we do not view the scene directly from the perspective of one of the checkpoint solders. Compared with a more distanced technique of interviewing subjects after the fact, Cahill's framing puts us with the soldiers—as they see the scene unfold. We learn details as they learn them and from

their perspective. When Cahill, as a character, does appears he is unnamed, described only as "a big American with a shaggy brown beard" (40). As a way to further distance himself from the perspective, the scene unfolds with Cahill present, but not part of the immediate scene, which focused on negotiations between Pedro Benet, a Venezuelan government official, and the soldiers:

> The three gringos he was shepherding, Pedro told the soldiers, 'were all obsessed with a book written many years ago by an Englishman. A boy's book it was, called *The Lost World*, and it was full of improbable adventures and dinosaurs. (40)

Clearly, the details are meant to suggest that the Americans are harmless, merely following a schoolboy fantasy, not spies allied with Marxist revolutionaries.

As the scene continues, we are asked to see Cahill and the other two men as not just harmless, but foolish:

> One of the soldiers interrupted Pedro.
> 'They want to Climb Mount Roraima?' he asked.
> 'Yes, yes.'
> 'In the rainy season?'
> 'Yes, yes.'
> 'Wouldn't it be more clever," the soldier asked, 'for them to climb it in the dry season?'
> 'Yes, clearly, but that is just the point,' Pedro said. 'No one has ever climbed the mountain in the rainy season. The gringos want to be first. They want to see all the waterfalls and things no one has ever seen before up there.'
> 'They want to climb the mountain in the rainy season because of a book about dinosaurs?' The soldier asked in a level voice. Then he checked the gringos' passports very carefully. (40)

While this opening scene is clearly intended as comic effect—readers, too, are supposed to wonder why the three men want to climb the mountain in terrible conditions—it also has the effect of establishing the level-headedness of the checkpoint soldiers. First, they

are concerned about spies and rebels. Then, they are concerned with the stupid, and potentially dangerous idea prompted by "a book about dinosaurs." Such positioning is not an explicit critique of imperialist tradition of conquests, or as Lisle puts it, the masculinist attempts of "travel writers [to] regain the power to be first, to be tough." Instead, Cahill offers readers an embodied, narrative critique of the foolishness in adventure and travel. His perspective on the journey amplifies the materially wretched conditions in a way that acts against the promotional qualities of much travel writing, particularly the kind of nature-based adventure celebrated by *Outside.*

Unlike Nelson, who uses the details of his presence on the island—and the presence of other beings and natural processes— as a moment to explore the ways in which we can be connected to a place, Cahill celebrates the miserable. He suffers, in effect, so readers won't have to. "The Lost World" becomes a catalogue of misadventure, misery, and horror, both natural and human. The group, for instance, visits El Dorado prison, a place "where the mind became warped in the rain and the heat, where the soul rotted inside a man" (41). Later, in a moment of amplifying *isocolon* reminiscent of Susan Orlean's description of the Fakahatchee, Cahill tells us, "I am frightened by the jungle, I am frightened by the sickly sweet odors, by the moist darkness, by the dark fecundity. I am frightened by the chaos" (42-3). Still later, Cahill explores his presence in the place, not with detailed descriptions of material conditions (although in many places he describes the volume and intensity of the rain), but with reference to his feelings and emotional sense of the place:

> We had reached our goal [the top of Mount Roraima], but I found it difficult to think anything at all. The constant torrential rains affected the spirit, made one feel empty and soulless and instantly stupid. When I found myself wondering whether it would be possible to die by lying on my back with my mouth open, I knew I had to get out of the rain. (55)

There is a small moment of triumph as "impossibly, the mists cleared" and Cahill describes the event he's come to see: "All the waters—waters from everywhere atop Roraima—would meet at the precipice of mountain. There, with a terrible roar of release, they'd fall forever into the green world far below" (56). Cahill, however, doesn't end the piece with this moment of sublimity. Instead, he immediately takes the focus off the experience and himself, describing a clip from "a Caracas daily, featur[ing] a picture of Pedro and Luis. It says that despite many hazards, they made what is believed to be the first rainy season ascent of Roraima. Nick, Mark, and I are mentioned in passing" (56).

Cahill could have easily chosen to delete this moment or spent time celebrating his part in the first ascent. He does not. Instead, as part of his ongoing ethos building, he chooses to foreground the Venezuelan's success over his own, erasing or countering a rhetorical appropriation of the kind Spurr describes. Neither does Cahill wrap up "The Lost World" with the victory of self-enlightenment, the kind that might encourage others to follow in his footsteps. Instead, he ends with a second echo of a colossal tragedy that yokes the danger of fanaticism with the foolishness of adventure:

> I knew that airfield…I had landed there on my way to Jonestown, some fifteen miles away.
>
> I had a sudden vision of all those wasted lives, all those bodies bloating in the heat and rain at Jonestown. The thought of more bodies [because of a recent plane crash] lying out in that stinking jungle choked me, brought a taste of bile into my throat

> *La selva es nuestra alidad*. The jungle is your friend. The jungle won't hurt you.
>
> There are no punch lines in the jungle. (59)

While Cahill includes moments of humor in "The Lost World," they are usually reserved for taking the pressure off the seriousness of the journey. In the end, the article is a cautionary tale built by developing an ethos of perspective and modesty. Cahill is a participant in the narrative, but not the hero. Readers are drawn to trust him and his account because of the fairness with which he develops the perspective and through his choice of details that accentuate the true danger of this kind of exploration. It is this kind of seriousness and self-reflection that Rich Miller examines in his analysis of "In the Valley of the Shadow of Death." Miller suggests that Cahill operates "through several layers of discourse and a conscious effort to involve the reader in the scene around him, Cahill impresses his own values in ways that may not be so obvious to the reader" (par 2). This is equally true of "The Lost World." Unfortunately, the surface level of showmanship and farce and "manly" adventure are what most critics seem to examine in his work. These are the very qualities, not his sense of propriety or skill with narrative and perspective, that link him to "the worst and most trivial stuff" in a magazine like *Outside* (Quammen, *Wild* 15).

Selling (Out) Nature and Adventure

Although her analysis doesn't focus on or mention *Outside,* Anne Beezer's "Women and 'Adventure Travel' Tourism" suggests some lines of critique for the publication. She

notes how gender, class and race were inscribed in pre-twentieth century travel narratives and reminds us that:

> Clearly, the ways in which twentieth-century [and early twenty-first century] adventurers are constructed in 'adventure travel' publicity differs from these earlier travel discourses. They are, for example, now invited to escape from the modern Western world and to 'explore' or 'encounter' other cultures, dwelling on the difference. The traveller is described as nomadic, moving through countries and acquiring 'experience' on the way. (123)

The advertisements Beezer examines suggest that readers should see difference in positive terms and adventure travel as an opportunity to break from the "Western 'selfhood'" and selfishness. She adds:

> 'Real travel' publicity insists that it is [a] willingness to learn from others, to accept difference, and to dismantle prior conceptions and prejudices which distinguishes the late-twentieth century adventure traveller from his or her nineteenth century counterparts, and from the tourist of today who is only interested in 'buckets of cheap red wine and a suntan.' This emphasis on the dissolution of self resonates with certain postmodern perspectives on identity. (123)

While Beezer follows up with a discussion of several versions of such postmodern perspectives, we only have to turn to Iyer's conception of the global soul to imagine one version of postmodern identity that's not critique, but celebration. The global soul, of course is not someone who necessarily lets go of selfhood in favor of selflessness or abandons a strong sense of personal identity and self in favor of the "dissolution of self" Beezer describes. For Iyer, this is a condition both of hybridity and that of the global multiculture. It is true, however, the Iyer's language often suggests a loss or dissolution of self, like his reference at various points to America or Japan as home, but not to

England, the country where he was raised. For Iyer the condition of travel *is* the postmodern condition.

By contrast, Cahill's narrative doesn't develop a dissolution of self of the kind that Beezer suggests some adventure travel programs offer, nor does Cahill offer hybridity and the global soul's multiculture as his solution to a postmodern sense of self. Cahill's rhetorical strength seems to lie in his ability to create a persona and craft an ethos that allow him to draw on and borrow from various conceptions of travel (imperialists, modern, postmodern), yet maintain a sense of self as well as develop the "willingness to learn from others" that mark some of the advertisements Beezer analyzes. One big problem occurs when such open-ended selfless-selfhood comes in contact with the other editorial and the advertising of a magazine like *Outside*. The publication develops an ethos of selfless understanding of difference (whether cultures or the natural world). However, it also celebrates a kind of gear-heavy, technology-driven, expedition-style adventure far removed from the adventure travel practiced by Cahill or Mark Jenkins.

Even a quick glance at *Outside* magazine is enough to suggest that its total rhetorical effect can overcome the sense of care and attentiveness that a writer like Cahill or Quammen bring to their subject and embody in their writing styles. Cover photography—even in early issues—depicts hard body fantasies,[36] suggests a kind of conquest ethic,[37] or seems to treat nature as mere playground.[38] Over the past five years,

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[36] June 2008, April 2005, March 2005, May 2004, Oct/Nov 1980.

[37] Dec 2001, Jan 1998, April 1998.

[38] Feb 2001, Dec 1997, Sept 1980, Jan 1981.

the cover photography has also changed, featuring headshots or full images of individuals styled more like an issue of *People, In Style*, or *Vanity Fair*, than a magazine "dedicated to covering the people, sports and activities, politics, art, literature, and hardware of the outdoors" (About Us). The cover images suggest that the magazine puts humans and newsstand sales first. The cover call-outs indicate that *Outside* is not far removed from the rhetoric of presence in earlier forms of travel narrative, including the masculinist versions that Lisle and others critique: "Why K2 is the Meanest Mountain on Earth (& Everest is for Sissies)" (Nov. 2003), "Shredding Everest" and "Conquering Africa's Wildest Rivers" (Jan 2007), "Undiscovered Patagonia" (November 2005), and "First Contact: Inside the Dangerous Quest to Find an Undiscovered Primitive Tribe" (February 2005). This is not to say every issue or even every story promotes and suggests this masculinity and conquering version of travel writing. Clearly, too, the sensationalist language and images are more about marketing than about serving as signals of any editorial or art department intent to shape the way readers think about their place in the world. Even so, this bending to sensationalism suggests a silent complicity on the part of the editorial and art department staff. If the public understands its connection to the environment, nature, and other cultures through such a visual and verbal rhetoric of conquest (what Pratt would call the rhetoric of illegitimate presence and Spurr the rhetoric of empire), then it's difficult for the intent of a well-meaning staff member or individual writer to succeed in combating such rhetoric with a more ethically responsible rhetoric of presence of his or her own.

In fact, now more than ever market pressure drives *Outside* magazine, and the publication's editors see the magazine in competition with *Men's Journal, Men*'s *Health*, *National Geographic Adventure, Esquire,* and *GQ* ("Audience Profile"). Even more telling than these competing publications, several of which share *Outside*'s sensibility, is the information that "reader surveys have shown that the publication most frequently read by *Outside* readers is the *Wall Street Journal*" (Andersen), and readers have annual household income of $135,841 ("Audience Profile"). Although we cannot categorically link income-level and publications read to attitudes about human's part in the natural world or western culture's place in the larger world, this information suggests both an acquisitive, consumer culture and the "'roughing it' at highly inflated prices" Beezer suggests (129). In fact, the "Active Traveler" advertising section near the end of an *Outside* issue, offers exactly the same kind of images and presentation of foreign cultures and landscapes that Beezer critiques.

All of this is a long way from Larry Burke's initial, high-minded idea for the magazine. "We wanted to create something that has a higher sensibility about the world we live in," says Burke,

> about the planet we live on and wrap this all in a really fun experience both internally as the staff of the magazine as well as create a community…of people who really understand the lifestyle, who really participate in this lifestyle on a year-round basis, have a higher sensitivity for the world outside, and what we wanted to do was inspire more people to participate in this world outside and in that way creating a vested interest, hopefully, in their participation to promote a healthier environment. (Cerretani)

The publication as it now exists does inspire readers to participate "in this world outside," but the cumulative rhetorical effect is to view this world as little more than pool or playground. This is not to say that individual articles, editors, and writers embody any long-standing hostility toward the environment or local cultures of any continent. To be sure, many of them are affable individuals who clearly enjoy what they do. They are the kind of people, "who begin their day with a run in the hills near the office" or who take off "for a lunch-hour [bicycle] ride" (Altschul). An active lifestyle, however, does not always translate into in an active ethical sensibility. Commercialization of a magazine's subject is nothing new, but with a magazine like *Outside*, which sells the very resource its publisher suggests its staff and readers respect, the stakes are much higher, even more so when advertiser-driven manipulation seeps into its editorial content.

Chip Rawlins puts this point more forcefully:

> *Outside* seems to me a money-driven machine. After *The Complete Walker IV* was published [in 2002], they asked me several times to write something, so I tried a brief review of ultra-lightweight sleeping bags. The gear editor tried to lean on me to drop bags made by firms that didn't advertise (e.g. Integral Designs of Canada, which he characterized as 'three guys with a sewing machine') and slot in bags by large advert buyers such as Kelty. Failing in that, he kept cutting the performance data from my tests and rewriting my copy into breezy crap. At wit's end, I pulled the plug, asking for a kill fee and assurance that my name would not be used in connection with whatever they published. Which was breezy crap. (Email to author)

Rawlins' account of editorial interference is only one small example of the manipulation that can occur when revenue decisions outweigh editorial integrity, but the cumulative effects of such changes can influence the ways in which we receive—or don't

receive—in information about other issues. His account also offers a behind-the-scenes detail of the editorial process not evident or discernable to most readers. In the same email, Rawlins also suggested that it was partly because of larger-scale editorial meddling that one long-time *Outside* columnist quit writing for the publication. I want to stress that *Outside* still employs many thoughtful individuals (both Quammen and Cahill are editors-at-large, and Barry Lopez is a correspondent) and publishes some thorough environmental reporting such as Patrick Symmes's "River Impossible," Bill McKibbon's, "Hello, I Must Be Going," and Cahill's "The Shame of Escobilla" and "The Shame of Escobilla, Part II." but the overall rhetorical effect of the magazine's seductive blend of must-have gear, get-to places, and must-have adventures is more than enough to wash over the influence of even the most thoughtful, well-written article. In short, the editors of *Outside* should remember "that [their] work is received not by some generalized 'gentle reader' but by an affluent, mobile class of enthusiasts who look to us for travel information as much as inspiration" (Rawlins, "Selling"). Despite his continued connections with the magazine, this is a lesson that Cahill seems to have learned. Articles like "The Lost World" suggest to readers that travel and adventure writing can offer something beyond details for a new itinerary. At its best, an article like "The Lost World" uses the rhetoric of presence to illustrate the personal and cultural costs of adventure.

> Standing on the edge of an ice field in a wind strong enough to lean on, squinting in the buttery light, it was as if I were seeing the earth for the very first time. I felt less homeless than I have ever felt anywhere, and I knew immediately that I had to return.…Antarctica was my love affair, and in the south I learned another way of looking at the world. What I want to do now is take you there.
>
> —Sara Wheeler, from *Terra Incognita*

> [W]e find instances of indifference and deliberate neglect, or at the other extreme, keen interest as potential economic resource and base of political power; we find desert and ice viewed as threatening presences to be conquered in the name of national pride and manhood, or as challenge to the prowess of science; and last, though certainly not least, we find worshipful admiration tinged by fear.
>
> —Yi-Fu Tuan, from "Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics"

CHAPTER FIVE

In the Presence of Extreme Environments

Carefully framed by a writer's sense of ethics, a book like *The Island Within* uses the rhetoric of presence as a means of transporting readers to a place, allowing them to identify and understand the location. In an earlier chapter, I noted the paradox that the vividness with which Nelson describes the island might have the opposite effect of the one intended by Nelson. Instead of reading the book "as a guide to non-travel" (xii), readers might respond to *The Island Within's "*showing" argument by booking a flight to Sitka and then following in Nelson's footsteps. Not only would this misread one of Nelson's primary purposes, as readers try to know another's place instead of coming to know their own, but it also might have a detrimental environmental impact. As I also suggested earlier, careful readers are more likely to resolve the paradox for themselves and read *The Island Within* as a remarkably vivid demonstration of how they might live their own lives in their own places.

This chapter takes up where the previous chapter left off. Nelson's book is an example of the ethical use of the rhetoric of presence. By contrast, *Outside* and much of the adventure travel industry employs the rhetoric of presence in order to evoke wonder in its readers and encourage them to go to the places described, and such use of the rhetoric of presence ignores or downplays any ethical obligation to the places these tourists visit. As a result, tourists might miscalculate the risks involved in such adventures and damage the places to which they have been drawn. This is exactly the condition described by Rawlins' research documenting the very real effects of "a single, published page of descriptive writing" ("Selling" 1). Rawlins documents how Jon Krakauer's article, "The Wind Rivers," led to an increase in visitors and how "the general vicinity of the lake was trampled by human and horse traffic" immediately after *Outside* published Krakauer's article (6). The remainder of this chapter explores how depictions of Antarctica and Antarctic travel use the rhetoric of presence as a deliberate way to encourage visitors. While standards exist to protect Antarctica, they are voluntary. Instead of reminding prospective tourists about the sensitivity of the environment or warning them of the dangers in visiting such an extreme environment, many tour operators use the rhetoric of presence to encourage wonder and a sense of Antarctica as adventure playground. Like the Alaskan cruise operators mentioned in an early chapter, these operators foreground comfort, luxury, and excitement.

Downplaying Danger

The opening paragraphs of a recent *New York Times* article describes the real danger to individuals accepting the lure of adventure travel promised by a publication like *Outside* or an adventure travel brochure:

> They were modern adventure travelers, following the doomed route of Sir Ernest Shackleton to the frozen ends of the earth. They paid $7,000 to $16,000 to cruise on a ship that had proudly plowed the Antarctic for 40 years.
>
> But sometime early yesterday, the *Explorer*, fondly known in the maritime world as "the little red ship," quietly struck ice. ("Icy Rescue")

Unlike Shackleton and his men, the passengers were quickly and safely rescued. None of them had to endure nearly two years of freezing and sub-freezing conditions on land, ice or sea. While the *New York Times* story focuses on the safety record and construction of the *Explorer*, the story itself raises questions about the safety and appropriateness of even modestly scaled Antarctic tourism**.** We might say that the fascination with travel to extreme places in the world as well as our continued interest in narratives of extremes, including narratives of extreme disaster, is a vestige of the imperialist desire to explore the out-of-reach with an eye toward exploiting as-yet-unknown resources. Richard Kerridge takes this claim one step further: "Both environmentalism and travel writing can be read, in many cases, as continuations, in a post-colonial world, of types of sensibilities formed in colonial conditions" (164). Like John Bartram, Joseph Banks, Charles Darwin, and other botanical and biological explorers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, contemporary adventurers, and by extension readers of adventure narratives, want to find something new, previously unseen, or nearly unknown.

By their nature, narratives of extreme adventure reach readers in a different way, even if they follow the genre conventions of a kind of travel writing that documents locations that more readers are likely to visit. Do most readers of *Into Thin Air*, for example, turn the book's pages and "get lost" in the narrative because they too want to climb Mt. Everest? According to *Everest News*, the numbers of successful summit attempts is growing rapidly. They report that 290 (with one death) individuals summited Everest during the 2008 climbing season, 120 (and four deaths) in 1998, 50 (and ten deaths) in 1988, and 25 (with two deaths) in 1978. It is more likely that readers come to Krakauer's book or Tim Severin's *The Brendan Voyage* as bystanders or onlookers, and not as potential visitors in the way that people who have read Mayle's *A Year in Provence* or Mayes *Under the Tuscan Sun* have a desire to visit Luberon, France or Cortona, Italy. Some readers likely come to Krakauer's narrative of the 1996 Everest climbing season and find something of the "worshipful admiration tinged with fear" that Tuan mentions with regard to arctic and desert environments. As John Crompton suggests in his study, individuals are often motivated less by the specifics of a place and more by psychological or social factors (415). Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* describes one of the most extreme environments and includes many, many details about the dangers of climbing and surviving at high altitude. As much as the rhetoric of presence in Krakauer's book may draw an occasional reader to visit base camp or—even less frequently—attempt to climb the mountain, it's important to remember that the book

began as "an article about the mushrooming commercialization of [Everest] and the attendant controversies" (26-7).

Despite the coverage of the 1996 Everest climbing season, most of the Himalayas remains off-limits to large-scale tourism simply because of the enormous physical demands of living and surviving at high altitude. By contrast, Antarctica represents a safe extreme and an accessible adventure destination. As a result, tour operators downplay what risks do exist and rely on the rhetoric of presence to encourage tourists' view of the continents as part of a particular metaphor: nature as playground. The images they create also encourage visitors to imagine what Crompton describes as the "opportunity for re-evaluating and discovering more about themselves" (416), "prestige" (417), and "novelty" (419-20). In many ways, Sara Wheeler's *Terra Incognita* works the same way. It encourages readers, in Clark's terms, to see Antarctica as "landscape" instead of "land" (9).

Antarctica in New Zealand

Tourists need not limit themselves to feeding their psychological fantasies by reading a textual simulation like *Terra Incognita.* They can also experience physical versions of a simulated Antarctica that employ a rhetoric of presence of their own. One such simulated environment is the International Antarctic Centre's "Snow & Ice Experience." Located in Christchurch, New Zealand, the Centre clearly wants its visitors to see the attraction as the capstone experience. The Centre provides potential visitors with the following context:

> Very few people have the opportunity to experience the awesome and magical beauty of Antarctica first-hand.
>
> At the Antarctic Attraction our aim is to re-create the atmosphere and environment of Antarctica, providing visitors with an interactive, fun and exciting experience of the 'Great White South.' For most people this will be the closest they will be able to come to experiencing this continent. ("Indoor Attraction")

The Centre then describes "The Snow & Ice Experience":

> By far the most popular feature in our indoor attraction, this custom-built polar room contains real snow & ice made on site by our very own snowmakers! Maintaining a constant temperature of a chilling -5 degrees Celsius, the Snow & Ice Experience is great fun for all ages. Slide down an icy slope, shelter in the ice cave, brave the wind chill machine at -18 degrees Celsius**,** or get 'exchillarated' in the 'Antarctic Storm' Complete with stunning lighting, authentic storm audio and 40 km/h winds, the Antarctic Storm blows every 30 minutes.
>
> Warm jackets and overshoes are provided. The Snow & Ice Experience and Antarctic Storm are a must for all visitors, especially those who have never seen snow before! A great photo opportunity! ("Indoor Attraction")

These descriptions frame the experience as entertainment instead of education. The International Antarctic Centre suggests, "our world class attraction does more than entertain. It has set out to convey the global significance of the 'frozen continent' to audiences of all ages and nationalities ("About Us"). Even with these reassurances, and even with its list of educational programming, the Centre bills itself, in a tag line that is part of its logo, as "The World's Best Antarctic Attraction." What visitors are likely to take away, then, is a version of Antarctica as playground. The "Snow & Ice Experience," and "Antarctic Storm" are severe, but the short-lived. The sense of *enargeia* they create

in visitors demonstrates an "exchillarated" experience of fun and excitement. Doing so, the experience might further suggest that a trip to Antarctica wouldn't be that bad.

Barry Lopez describes this type of detached, delocalized experience in "The American Geographies." Writing of theme park river rides, he argues, "the profound, subtle, and protracted experience of running a river is reduced to a loud, quick, safe equivalence, a pleasant distraction" (136). The International Antarctic Centre's historical information and discussion of current Antarctic science and exploration is unlikely to persuade visitors more forcefully than the rhetoric of presence experienced in the Centre's theme park version of Antarctic weather.

Remote Places and Responsibility

The existence of *Lonely Planet Antarctica* (2000) and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Arctic and Antarctic* (2003) further underscores an extreme version of the nature as playground metaphor. Such works jump over Rawlins' idea that "an affluent, mobile class of enthusiasts" purchase publications like *Outside* "for travel information [on out-of-the-way places] as much as inspiration" ("Selling" 7). With guidebooks like these, there is no need to read *Outside* magazine as a guidebook. If such people want to "travel in the footsteps of Scott and Shackleton, "they can purchase "*the* definitive guide to carry with you to the loneliest of lands" (*LP Antarctica*, back cover, original emphasis). *Lonely Planet Antarctica* exhibits the same tension between the consumerist ethic of *Outside* and the care ethic of a specific article inside the magazine.

Tony Wheeler is perhaps best known for the low impact, do-it-yourself backpacking ethic, and on the company's web site he writes, "at Lonely Planet sustainable and responsible have always been parts of our vocabulary" ("Responsible Travel"). Even with his concern, the volume on Antarctica begs this question: are there some places that tourism shouldn't touch? Moreover, how do guidebooks and travel brochures silently erase the dangers involved in travel to a place like Antarctica?

Even with the real dangers, the number of visitors increases annually and a trade group, International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators, has existed since 1991. According to IAATO, there were 37,552 Antarctic visitors in a roughly five-month November 2006-April 2007 season ("Tourism Summary"), just over five times the number of visitors in the 1996-1997 season ("Trends"). These statistics and the existence of IAATO tell us something of the way that Antarctica is being perceived by the tourism industry. Media coverage of the continent is also increasing. CBS and National Public Radio, for example, have broadcast first-person coverage from Antarctica in early 2008. To be sure, it is not simply a question of numbers of tourists and media exposure. Antarctic researcher Bernard Stonehouse put it this way: "There is no strong evidence that tourism has had a significant impact on the plants, wildlife or landscape of Antarctica" (qtd in Nicholls 48.). While Stonehouse doesn't view current tourism as a problem, he does suggest that this may not be the case in the future. This is because the Antarctic tourism industry regulates itself.

To be fair, however, AATO does encourage tour operators and visitors to recognize the problems and unique concerns of Antarctic tourism:

> Antarctica is the largest wilderness area on earth, unaffected by large-scale human activities. Accordingly, this unique and pristine environment has been afforded special protection. Furthermore, it is physically remote, inhospitable, unpredictable and potentially dangerous. All activities in the Antarctic Treaty Area, therefore, should be planned and conducted with both environmental protection and safety in mind. ("Guidelines: Tour Operators")

This suggests that despite or because of the general criticism of ecotourism, IAATO wants its member operators to do all they can to protect Antarctica and to minimize the kind of disaster that befell the *Explorer*.

A Powerful Symbol

Even with these precautions on the part of IAATO or the expressed sense of responsibility on the part of Tony Wheeler, readers—at least those who can afford it—may still feel and succumb to the inescapable pull of Antarctica. As Terry Gifford argues,

> The recent immediate success in the UK of Sara Wheeler's travel book *Terra Incognita* (1996) might be due to her ability to draw explicitly upon what she calls 'the symbolic properties of Antarctica.' She admits that the timelessness of 'a place that knows no degradation' [and] endorses her own explicit sense of Antarctica as Arcadia. [T]he pastoral nature of [her] writing is clear from the fact that death is, of course, actually a very real presence in the Antarctic" (79).

One way to understand Gifford's point about *Terra Incognita* is that while Wheeler's book highlights and recounts the deaths of early explorers, the word "death" occurs only a handful of times. Its residue and its presence, however, hovers over the book in the way that Wheeler foregrounds Robert Scott's hut. In fact, the book ends with a scene of

Wheeler visiting the hut, because, "Before I could go home, there was one thing I still had to do" (333). What she "had to do" is sleep in Scott's bunk. This act seems to collapse the material and the rhetorical. She is literally walking in the footsteps of Scott and other Antarctic explorers, but the act is also a symbolic way for Wheeler to connect to Scott and the Antarctic:

> I had traveled thousands of miles, lost a lot of body heat, watched hundreds of beards ice up, realized how little I had seen, or knew. Antarctica was more of a *terra incognita* than ever…But I still felt the same about Antarctica. It was the great thrill of my life—on top of the snow hill, on Scott's bunk, in what was about to become my future. It had allowed me to believe in paradise, and that, surely, is a gift without price.
>
> Then I laid my head on his pillow, and went to sleep. (334)

Nelson's *The Island Within* is a book filled with rich descriptions about the island's specifics, a book about things seen and unseen, a book very much of and about the physical place. By contrast, *Terra Incognita* is a book of memory and the mind. Unlike Cahill's "The Lost World," *Terra Incognita* is a book that suggests that we can find what we are looking for and that misery is worth it. Unlike Nelson's book, which argues readers should find their own places to know, Wheeler's book ends with the claim that an unknown land may be the very place to find what you seek.

This is not the same as *Outside* magazine's commercial call to adventure, Wheeler's book does imply that the rhetoric of presence is no replacement for action and being there. In a move that underscores this point, Wheeler ends the book by including, in full, Tennyson's "Ulysses," a poem that ends "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." In the end, *Terra Incognita*'s rhetoric may encourage more people (those who can

afford it), not fewer, to visit Antarctica. What's missing in the book—with the exception of sections like the one about Taylor Lake, where Wheeler learns "all waste from the Dry Valleys is retrograded to McMurdo" (63), is a sense of the larger impact of humans on the environment. When Wheeler writes, "What I want to do now is take you there" (xxi), the words may be read not as introduction, but invitation.

Selling Berths on a Boat

Unlike a magazine that includes many voices with which readers can identify, travel brochures ask us to see and imagine places from a singular perspective. Like magazines, brochures also offer a potent combination of text and image to develop a rhetoric of presence. They require readers and potential travelers to be even more mindful of the ways that they combine text and image to develop a rhetoric of presence that constructs and calls forth a particular itinerary. Even so, Richard Butler reminds us, "The importance of the visual image in determining or shaping images and visitation is probably as great as it is unstudied" (51). More useful is Ann Tyler's reminder from a graphic design perspective:

> The goal of visual communication is to persuade an audience to adopt a new belief. However, this necessitates a reference to existing beliefs through formal devices. In developing an argument, a designer does not have a choice of referencing beliefs or not referencing beliefs; the choice lies in what beliefs are referenced. (29)

What Tyler describes here is the pragmatic version of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's presence when they write, "By the very fact of selecting certain elements and presenting

them to the audience, [these elements'] importance and pertinency to the discussion are implied" (116). In the case of travel brochures, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's "elements" of argument and Tyler's "beliefs" can be selected through the synergy of text and image. In following section, I examine the dominant beliefs made present in several Antarctic tour brochures.

The best example of an Antarctic tour operator being mindful of its environmental impact and paying attention to the physical presence of its guests in Antarctica is Linblad Expeditions. As Stonehouse describes, "the model for ship-borne Antarctic tourism, which carries well over 95 per cent of tourists to the continent, was created by Lars-Eric Lindblad" (Nicholl 48). Stonehouse portrays Linblad as "a tour operator who had a strong conservation mindset and took great care to ensure his operations caused no damage" (Nicholl 48). Linblad Expeditions' Antarctic brochures focus on experience:

> [T]he hallmark of our expeditions has always been our field expertise: the botanists, geologists, birders, anthropologists, historians, divemasters, undersea specialists and expedition leaders who travel with you, adding knowledge and sharing insights during each expedition. (9).

Even so, the brochure relies on the image of travel as escape, suggesting, "Antarctica is as far away from 'it all' as you can get" (44).

Unlike other tour operators, Linblad does not shy away from mentioning the risks, reminding its readers "Antarctica is famously remote—and a challenging, potentially dangerous landscape" (44). Yet he visual rhetoric of the two-page spread downplays these dangers (44-45). Taking up nearly half the spread is a photograph of a small Zodiac

filled with people and idling on calm waters. The water is clear enough to see a humpback whale's fins below the surface. A second, smaller image in the lower left corner of the spread shows eleven people at a ship's bow, overlooking broken chucks of pack ice and equally calm waters. We can label these constituent elements of a visual rhetoric of presence 'manageability by comparison.' The visual images create a sense of Antarctica as calm and stable, and they downplay the text's partial sentence describing a "potentially dangerous landscape." Further erasing the presence of potential danger are two additional passages refereeing to Linblad's history and experience. In a moment of direct address, the body copy announces, "you can take advantage of our history, expertise, and ever-present drive to remain true to the concept of an expedition" (45), and a right-hand sidebar underscores this claim with a subhead reminding readers of the company's "cumulative experience" (45). The presence of experience is again highlighted by the next, two-page spread that includes the headline "40+ Years in Antarctica" and a facsimile of a letter announcing the naming of Linblad Cove (46-7). Behind the letter, taking up the full spread, is an image of a small cove ending in a glacial wall. The image is uncaptioned, but suggests some of the real places Linblad has been and visitors will go.

After establishing the company's credentials and assuring potential tourists that there is little real danger, the brochure devotes six full pages to images that are unmarked by headlines, captions, or sidebars. The first shows a penguin colony (48-9), suggesting

visitors can experience part of the film *March of the Penguins* for themselves. A moment in Julia Whitty's recent article about her experience on the very tour that the Linblad's brochure advertises underscores the point that the connection is not accidental: "I hear more than a few guests describe how they came to be here—struck by spontaneous wanderlust after viewing that paean to snow and fatherhood, *March of the Penguins*" (par. 17). The next two pages include an image in the lower right corner that shows a group of penguins in the foreground, the ship in the background, and a setting sun behind (51). The penguins look like human bathers just back from a refreshing dip. Here the total effect of the visual rhetoric of presence suggests that this Antarctic trip is no more difficult and every bit as relaxing as a Caribbean cruise.

The itinerary section of the brochure further emphasizes this sense that a trip on the *Explorer* is filled with comfort, leisure, and pleasant scenery. For example, the brochure describes the Drake Passage crossing at the trip's beginning like this:

> Awake this morning well into out journey across Drake Passage. Lying between Cape Horn and the Antarctic Peninsula, the Drake holds a unique place in maritime lore. Sometimes misty and gray, other times calm and clear, crossing the legendary Drake Passage is unforgettable. (54)

The return crossing emphasizes shipboard luxury: "As we sail back to Ushuaia, there'll be plenty of time to enjoy a massage, log some time in the gym, or catch up on some reading" (55). Punctuating these descriptions are visual reminders of some of Antarctica's iconic fauna: whales and penguins. In Tyler's terms, the brochure demonstrates that a Linblad Antarctica cruise is safe and relaxing. The cruise also guarantees ready access to wildlife and scenery. "Safety" is mentioned eight times and

"experience" four times in the brochure, and the worst weather pictured is a gray day with calm seas. What is left out, what lacks presence, in this description of safety and comfort are the actual conditions that a tourist is likely to experience while at sea. The *Lonely Planet* volume is more forthcoming in this respect:

> Extra care is needed when moving about any ship, but passengers on Antarctic cruises especially should keep in mind the rule of 'one hand for the ship,' always keeping one hand free to grip a railing or other support should the ship suddenly roll. You may even notice that some berths…are equipped with airline-style seat belts for use when the sea gets a bit heavy. (11)

In fact, *Lonely Planet Antarctica* puts in much of what the Linblad brochure leaves out.

"This Spectacular Rugged Wilderness"

Like most ship-based Antarctic tours, including Linblad, Peregrine Polar Expeditions uses Ushuaia as its starting point. Unlike Linblad, whose brochure uses full-page images and emphasizes the photography, Peregrine opts for a text-heavy style. Only the back cover uses a full-page image. A typical page uses an even mix of text, image, and graphics, but because of the way lines and other graphic elements break up photographs, what stands out is the text. In a moment of visual repetition, every page—including front and back covers—includes at least one graphic element reminiscent of Peregrine's logo. The effect is a not-so-subtle reminder of the particular Antarctic operator providing the brochure.

Like Linblad, Peregrine mentions the experience of its captains, crew, and tour leaders experience; however, the image they create of Antarctic travel is much different.

Their emphasis asks potential tourists to see a Peregrine tour as an off-boat adventure: "We aim to spend as much time off ship as possible. With our fleet of sturdy, inflatable Zodiac boats, we are able to disembark all passengers at once, swiftly, easily, and safely" (5). Additionally, the brochure positions the trip not as a comfortable holiday, but as an exclusive opportunity to witness nature's sublime excess. Like *The Island Within*, the Peregrine brochure relies on strings of adjective-noun phrases to develop a sense of *enargeia*. Potential tourists can witness "[a]bundant wildlife, vast icy plains, majestic glimmering mountains, giant blue icebergs–this pristine continent is a place that most people can only imagine visiting" (24). The adjective-heavy prose continues later on the page in a passage that emphasizes never-ending discovery:

> As we continue south towards the Antarctic Peninsula we see our first icebergs and thrill to our first glimpse of Antarctica. The western coast of the Antarctic Peninsula is a rugged, mountainous spur flanked by ancient glaciers and massive ice shelves that creep down to the water's edge. In the lee of the peninsula lie dozens of islands, home to extraordinary concentrations of wildlife, including Weddell seals, elephant seals, skuas, giant petrels and rookeries of gentoo, chinstrap and Adelie penguins. (24).

Linblad breaks their itinerary section of their brochure into individual days. The result is terse postcard-like prose: "Our first landfall is at one of the many islands of the Antarctic Peninsula region" (54). With a greater reliance on text, Peregrine has the space to develop vivid mini-narratives, like the one above, with all the power of the rhetoric of presence found in Nelson or Iyer. The present tense verbs transport potential tourists to the expedition ship, while the adjective-noun phrases create a sense of size and scale. The passage ends with a catalog of mammal and birds species. The message for potential

tourists in this passage is that Peregrine the tour operator can supply abundance.

The operator can also get its guests close to nature:

> During our time in Antarctica, we enjoy superb close-up views of beautifully sculpted icebergs, and often come face to face with humpback whales—sometimes close enough to smell their fishy breath. We'll visit penguin rookeries where the birds number in the hundreds of thousands, laugh at seal pups playing in the shallows and come to understand the exquisite, fragile wilderness of Antarctica. (25)

Whale encounters occur "often" and guests are placed in the middle of the action to experience the excesses of nature. Such textual description contrasts with the visual images in the brochure, which usually include either single animals or small groups. Peregrine's final point, that we will "come to understand the exquisite, fragile wilderness of Antarctica," operates as an afterthought. The presence of adventure and activity ("kayaks" and "kayaking" combined occur 32 times, "hike" occurs 13 times, "camping" occurs 11 times, and "adventure" occurs 10 times) overwhelm the message of care. The brochure lacks the kind of reflection that texts by Nelson, Iyer, and Cahill offer. Any deep understanding of the animals and environments—regardless of whether this actually happens once an individual takes a trip with Peregrine—gets written out of the story by the excesses of exploration and adventure made present by the brochure's narratives.

Too Many Boats, Too Many People

Both Linblad and Peregrine, despite the difference in dominant presence between the brochures, encourage readers and potential tourists to see themselves as part of a small group. No photograph contains more that a dozen people, and most of them include only

a handful. Even if, as Stonehouse suggests, Antarctica tourism has yet to cause any serious ecological harm, tourists may be getting in each other's way:

> More tourists also change the aesthetic. Matt Drennan spends several hours a day calculating how to keep the Endeavour out of the line of sight of all the other ships competing for space at the 20 or 25 most popular landing sites on the peninsula. Maintaining the illusion of solitude is hectically orchestrated every July during the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators' online electronic derby. Ignorant of what December or January will hold, ships submit itineraries for which landing sites they'd like to visit on which days. (Whitty, par. 56)

In the short term, such shuffling for the sake of "maintaining the illusion of solitude" may be possible. In the long term, however, the rhetoric of presence that draws visitors to Antarctica may make even the illusion of solitude impossible. As a result, tourists—even well intentioned ones—may not be able to really see what makes Antarctica important or special. Like the ecological message in Peregrine's brochure, the importance of the place may get buried in abundance. Whitty offers one current version of that potential reality in her description of a "Port Lockroy…crowded with tourists in kayaks, tourists beachcombing, tourists on Zodiac tours of the harbor" (par. 64). A final problem illustrated by Whitty's lengthy article is not one related to the rhetoric of brochures, tour operators, and travel industry organizations. It is the problem of individual motivation:

> You can't protect what you don't know, said Lars-Eric Lindblad upon first bringing tourists to Antarctica in 1969.…From his pioneering efforts, the notion of ecotourists as ambassadors was born. Nearly 40 years into the training program, the plebes aboard the *Endeavour* have a ways to go. One guest, when asked after a two-hour onboard lecture on seabird identification whether the bird overhead is a southern giant petrel or black-browed albatross, looks up, shrugs, and admits, I really don't care. (Whitty, par 28)

In some ways my final chapter addresses the seeming apathy of the *Endeavor* guest, for the chapter offers suggestions for encouraging composition students to take a greater interest in the physical world around them.

Travel is the best way we have of rescuing the humanity of places and saving them from abstraction and ideology.

— Pico Iyer, from "Why We Travel"

People's responses to place—which are shaped in large part by their bodies, by the physical characteristics they carry with them through the spatial world—determine whether they will "enter" at all, or rush through, or linger—and those decisions contribute to how a space is "used" or reproduced.

—Nedra Reynolds, from *Geographies of Writing*

CHAPTER SIX

Getting Outside: Conclusions and the Classroom

In the preceding chapters, I have asked readers to consider the ways that writers describe and recreate the places where they live, work, and travel. My argument is based not simply on the value of extended rhetorical analyses of nature and travel writing. Texts like *The Island Within* and *The Global Soul* use the rhetoric of presence to develop a sense of *enargeia* within readers, but rhetorical success in these instances also includes identifying with the text's underlying argument. In Nelson's case, this means that readers should be able to see his island with enough detail and come to understand that knowing one's geographical place is worthwhile and important. Rhetoric of presence in *The Island Within* develops in readers a sense of *enargeia* not so they can map and travel to the island, nor is the book simply description and diversion. In Philippon's terms, *The Island Within* serves a social function (24), one achieved through Nelson's use of the rhetoric of presence. Nelson asks readers to see his book as an example of the ways that we might come to know our own places. The richness of his description and reflection offer his

proof of "the rewards of exploring the place in which a person lives rather than searching afar" (xii).

The preceding analysis of writing by Nelson, Iyer, Cahill, Wheeler, and Antarctic tour operators accepts Anderson's point that creative nonfiction has taken over the ethical work of the novel in its "efforts to persuade us to attitudes, interpretations, opinions, and action" (2). By examining the rhetoric of presence as a significant part of this work, we can better understand the ways in which contemporary nature and travel writing responds to and helps create the culture of which it is a part. The rhetoric of presence may be prevalent in a range of texts, but it is particularly valuable to examine its use in narrative nonfiction. Nelson and Iyer provide cues that become interpretive guides for readers, but not every writer or every text does this. Many texts use narrative alone to develop their arguments. This exclusive use of narrative, including a reliance on the rhetoric of presence, can mask writing's persuasive ends. "The rhetorical value of stories," writes Doug Hesse, " is participatory, not logical" ("Persuading as Storying" 114). We are persuaded, in effect, because the story *is* a story. The rhetoric of presence contributes to this power. I argue that Nelson, Iyer, and Cahill are thoughtful and mindful writers; they are interested in the value and importance of place. By contrast, I have suggested that *Outside* magazine and at least some Antarctic tour operators, even as they mention and describe their sensitivity to fragile places, use the rhetoric of presence primarily for commercial means. Further examination of the way that various texts and genres use the rhetoric of presence within narratives can provide a richer sense of *how* such narratives operate as arguments.

While my dissertation extends the critical and analytical work undertaken by Anderson, Winterowd, and others, I see my study as even more valuable as a contribution to the ways we teach writing and rhetoric in the classroom. As Hesse warns,

> Writing teachers need to recognize the limitations of textbook descriptions of narrative. In particular, we need to recognize that stressing the attachment of 'points' to stories neglects how a narrative may function less as a chunk of evidence than as a form of argument. ("Persuading as Storying" 116)

In the next sentence, Hesse suggests that teachers "should discuss with students how stories can be used not only as bits of proof but also as means of transport, ways of getting readers from place to place, from ideas to ideas in essays" (116). If we discuss the ways that narrative can move readers from place to place, then it also makes sense to include an examination of the rhetoric of presence within these discussions. As a result, I conclude this chapter and dissertation by offering further justification for teaching nonfiction narratives of place and providing examples of how students can explore their presence within places including how we might ask them to think, talk, and write about the rhetoric of presence.

Narrative Nonfiction in the Composition Class

The conversation continues about what, exactly, first-year composition courses should teach. Richard Fulkerson's "Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century" is one of the most recent articles surveying and evaluating composition theory and pedagogy. Fulkerson's article alone prompted at least five published responses in *College Composition and Communication* as well as a lively online debate. There has been an

equally rich discussion about if and how narrative nonfiction should be taught in composition classes. While the genre has its own journals that offer a combination of critique and examples of the form (*The Fourth Genre* and *Creative Nonfiction* are two well-known examples), a special issue of *College English* edited by Hesse examines creative nonfiction's role in the composition classroom. In his editor's introduction, Hesse briefly explores the history of creative nonfiction within English studies in general and within composition and rhetoric in particular. In his introduction, Hesse mentions "several of creative nonfiction's epistemological trusses" (239), which might serve as starting points for an argument about teaching the form as part of a composition class. First, creative nonfiction develops from the position "[t]hat reality is mediated and narrativized" (239). In addition, the genre sees "the particular subjectivities of authors" as important parts of the form that "should be textually embodied rather than effaced" (239). In the same issue, Wendy Bishop argues, "When allowed to explore literary nonfiction…our writing students will develop a substantial set of strengths from which to undertake other disciplinary writing challenges" (273).

Hesse's comments provide teachers with a way to talk with our students about how creative nonfiction works. While a composition class might read and discuss theoretical texts as a way to understand how reality is mediated, it's more useful and immediately productive to develop a writing exercise that suggests the same point. We could, as I have done with my classes, go outside, sit on a large circle (facing in or out), and write for ten minutes about everything we experience. After the ten minutes are over, we compare details and realize that each of us selected slightly different things to

describe: one person catching snippets of conversation, another person focusing in the heat, and another describing the trees of late spring. Initially, the conversation turns to a few students being amazed by what their classmates noticed. Additionally, the exercise becomes a way to explore both of Hesse's points about creative nonfiction. For example, students can discuss and begin to understand how readers might interpret their writing because of the way subjectivity has steered each student writer to focus on particular details and exclude others. A second level of the assignment, for example, would ask students to take their descriptions and shape them into a coherent narrative that pictures the particular moment in time for someone who wasn't there. The combined exercises become a way for students to understand the selection involved in the rhetoric of presence.

Bishop's comments, by contrast, suggest that teaching creative nonfiction in writing classes allows students to "transfer" strengths learned from studying and writing creative nonfiction to other academic genres. One such strength is an understanding of the way that narrative augments other argumentative or persuasive strategies. Seen in this way, we can imagine students taking their experience with nonfiction narrative and the constituent techniques of the rhetoric of presence and applying them to an observation report for a sociology class or a case study involving effective management practice in a business class. In the case of a business class, this might take the form of a narrative based on actual, observed details of poor or effective management. A student might compose, for example, a catalog not just of location details (what they saw), but also a portrait of people's verbal and nonverbal interactions (who sighed and when and who

spoke in complete sentences and who used clipped sentences). Including these details and bringing knowledge of how creative nonfiction shapes "real" events into narrative scenes— demonstrating, rather than arguing—could develop a more effective case study. Such examples, however, do not explain why we should teach and have student write in subgenres of creative nonfiction in composition classes. Nor do they fully answer what an examination of the rhetoric of presence adds to the way we teach these genres. We can find some answers in the discussion of place-based education.

Nature Writing, the Rhetoric of Presence, and Place-based Education

Part of the argument for place-based education is that in-situ experiences in particular locations (on-campus ecosystems, outdoor field trips, and—perhaps less obvious to some—the classrooms, dorms, and other academic buildings in which our students spend so much time) have powerful and positive pedagogical value that can complement classroom practice. Broadly speaking, the argument is that content knowledge can and should be matched with experience in locations that reinforce the knowledge and provide students ways to better understand, apply, or enact what the learn from books, lectures, exercises, or class discussion. David Sobel's *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms & Communities* is one recent example of this renewed interest connecting place-based education and traditional classroom instruction. Richard Louv, writing for more general audience, takes a similar position in *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. We could trace such work back to mid-twentieth century precursors arguing for experiential education like John Dewey's 1938 *Education*

and Experience. Thinking even further back we might add the tradition of the European grand tour—while clearly an exclusive rather than inclusive activity—to such a tradition. Sobel and Louv cite a wide range of sources (from environmental education research to architecture journals and newspaper accounts) to develop their arguments, but other writers have made much the same case in less formal ways. Rachel Carson's *The Sense of Wonder* and Barry Lopez's brief "Children in the Woods" are but two examples of this informal approach.

Work in environmental and place-based education has started to move into writing classrooms in both theoretical and practical ways. Some of this work happened—and still goes on—by way of environmentally inflected readers and reader-rhetorics for use in first-year composition. Titles fitting this description include *A Forest of Voices*, *Green Perspectives: Thinking and Writing about Nature and the Environment*, *The Endangered Earth: Readings for Writers*, *Writing Nature: An Ecological Reader for Writers*, *Being in the World: An Environmental Reader for Writers*, *The Environmental Predicament: Four Issues in Critical Analysis*, and *Reading the Environment*. All these texts were first published in the mid-1990s. Instructors, of course, can use such texts independently of outside-the-class fieldwork and stick to classroom-based best practices. This approach, while useful, ignores the suggestions of Sobel, Louv, and others. Sobel, for instance, describes "'a pedagogy of place' as a theoretical framework that emphasizes the necessary interpenetration of school, community, and environment, whether it's urban, suburban, or rural" (11). Such a conception connects to the move by

compositionists and rhetoricians to develop students' civic literacy through service learning and other means.

Collections like *Ecocomposition*—with its blend of theoretical articles and narrative reflections on specific class practices—as well as books by Derek Owen, Nedra Reynolds, Randall Roorda, Cory Lewis, and a handful of articles in *CCC* and *College English* offer an expanded view of potential connections between and problems with place-based pedagogy and the writing classroom. Another approach is linked or team-taught courses that combine writing instruction and content knowledge in environmental biology, offering even richer potential connections. The connection between place-based education and the writing classroom is evident to anyone who has taken a class on a field trip, or even, perhaps, for an outdoor class session. Furthermore, place-based experiences allow students to explore for themselves the problem of translating material presence into language.

While teaching at Florida Gulf Coast University, a state university situated in southern Lee County, a colleague and I took students to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary (which contains old growth cypress–some of which are more than 500 years old) and Fakahatchee Strand, a Florida State Preserve labeled by Susan Orlean in *The Orchid Thief* as "A Green Hell." The Fakahatchee is not an immediately welcoming place, but "hot and wet and buggy and full of cottonmouth snakes and diamondback rattlers and alligators and snapping turtles and poisonous plants and wild hogs and things that stick into you and on you and fly into your nose and eyes" (Orlean 35). The polysyndetonic use of "and," developing a catalogue of existent and potential dangers, is one of the ways

that nature writing creates presence through amplification. When added to the already-mentioned chapter title, "A Green Hell," Orlean's sentence provides a foreboding summary of physical conditions and various plant and animal dangers. The technique helps conjure the actual annoyances and dangers for readers. Concerned about the negative effects of the rhetoric of presence, we did not have our students read Orlean's book before our trip.

Both Corkscrew and Fakahatchee are less than an hour from FGCU's campus, so they make easily accessible day trips. Students were awed by what they discovered. The unusually close, and occasionally unruly group was surprisingly focused, thoughtful, and patient with us and with one another. Some of this focus had to do with their fear of snakes and alligators, but most of it was due to the truly unfamiliar environment. Students were able to wade waist-deep in the dark, tannin rich waters, which remain cool even during the summer heat of Southwest Florida. They got to see the small, green, finger-like roots of a ghost orchid out of bloom. (It is a rare treat to see one in bloom.) They noticed the bright, crayon-colored lubber grasshoppers, ants, owls, and woodpeckers as well as bromeliads and ferns covering cypress knees and fallen trees. Thankfully, alligators kept out of sight and the only snakes they saw were roadkill along the access road or harmless species. The conventional wisdom about swamp walks is to make lots of noise to keep alligators away. When you are part of a fifteen-person group, however, it is difficult not to make noise while taking slow, deliberate steps in waist-deep water, pulling your feet from the rich, thick bottom muck with every step. In such a place, walking itself becomes a central part of the experience. Being part of a group also

increases what everyone notices and counteracts the pervasive myth that nature can only be properly appreciated in solitude.

The upshot of the trip is that most students reported being unaware of such places in their "backyard." I later asked them to translate their experiences into essays. It was clear, however, that their physical presence within a place like the Fakahatchee might—in part—make its own argument for preservation. In order, however, to share these experiences—or persuade others of a particular course of action based on such experiences—we must translate them into language. The material and aesthetic experience of my students sloshing through the swamp, then, becomes a first step toward individual appreciation of a place, but it also becomes the raw material from which they shape and transmit the experience to others whether the exigency is a prompting to share "what it was like" or something more broad-reaching like a realization regarding development and sprawl's threat to regrowth habitats similar to the Fakahatchee. Because my students were taking environmental biology and composition, they were able to explore both the systems that make the Fakahatchee special and develop narratives that described this place for others and make underlying arguments. Some wrote to fellow students who were taking other composition classes. Others wrote to prospective students, using their experience in Fakahatchee and on other field trips as examples of what made the linked courses so special. Although I designed these assignments before my own research into the rhetoric of presence, I can now see that part of what I was asking these students to do was rely on the rhetoric of presence in order to develop their narratives of place. More generally, the assignment accords with Dobrin and Weisser's

suggestion: “Nature and environment must be lived in, experienced to see how the very discourses in which we live react to and with those environments” (580).

The Campus as Text: Exploring the Campus Ecosystem Model

I expect that most new composition teachers have experienced a version of the following experience. On a warm spring or early autumn day a student will ask, “Can we have class outside today?” Perhaps some of us make excuses and move on with the day’s workshop or class discussion; however, I think there is value in taking students outside as I do with my Nature Writing and Composition classes. It is true that holding class outside the classroom can distract students and instructors, but when students see the campus as a site for writing and learning, such excursions can be as valuable as a circle of desks in a classroom. My work with FGCU’s Campus Ecosystem Model asked students to see the university’s campus as a subject of study.

Such writing, whether keeping a weekly field journal that recorded changes to the cypress swamps or composing a narrative that explored connections between the built and natural environments of campus, helps students recognize that writing is not something confined to a classroom, office, or dorm room. It also encourages them to practice hands-on research methods. As students connect their work to work by other students in other courses and semesters, they may come to realize that many problems and questions are not confined to a single paper, assignment sequence, course, or semester. As my colleagues who developed the initial model have suggested,

> Over time, the cumulative effect of the model is the development of an environmental history—a history that details the FGCU campus environment and its ecological functions, that examines its role in the human-environment relationship, and that assesses its impact on southwest Florida. (Tolley, par. 26)

Writing courses can play a large part in developing this kind campus-specific environmental history. Studying the rhetoric of presence gives students the skills to develop vivid narratives of their own and understand how narrative and description work in other disciplines. In team-taught or linked courses, for instance, writing students can examine how field notes and other forms of hands-on research get transformed into genres like ecological reports, environmental impact statements, narratives of places, and progress reports. In this way, there is the potential for students to examine not just the rhetoric of presence but the ways that the same data sets and research can become part of different genres with different rhetorical ends.

Antarctica in the Classroom

A more recent example of the way I deliberately made the rhetoric of presence part of my composition class is based on the University of Tennessee's recent switch to an inquiry-based model for the second semester composition course. As I explained to my students in the course syllabus, "The heart of this course…is learning to produce *new* knowledge on a subject through the often-interconnected methods of hands-on, historical, and academic inquiry." The course was designed around inquiry into nature and environments. At the outset, I also told them that writing assignments might include everything from developing entries for a multimedia field guide, to analyzing nature

shows and documentaries, to investigating a specific question related to how humans view, interact with, change, and even create our environments.

As a way to introduce the hands-on methods section of the course, I showed my students clips from *March of the Penguins* This film is particularly useful in writing classes because of the way it constructs a rhetoric of presence without the use of an on-camera host. After watching the scene, we had a class discussion about the various techniques the filmmakers used to develop a rhetoric of presence: from camera angles, to the length of shots, choice of music, and the narrator's delivery. As a second step, we asked one another questions about what kinds of research went into making the film. My students mentioned details that the filmmakers could have learned through observation but also those that were likely acquired by library-based research or by contacting biologists specializing in penguins and penguins and penguin behavior.

On another day, we watched scenes from the documentary *Of Penguins and Men*. Also directed by Luc Jacquet, this film tells essentially the same story as *March of the Penguins*, with Jacquet serving as narrator. For the purposes of exploring hands-on research methods, the film is invaluable. It documents how Jacquet and his filmmaking partner, Jerome Maison, made *March of the Penguins*. That is, the film gives viewers a behind-the-scenes look at the documentary filmmaking process. In particular, it's excellent at demonstrating the physical conditions the men endured while filming and living in Antarctica. It reveals all of the material conditions the Antarctic travel brochures conceal. Additionally, it gives students a sense of what's involved when someone undertakes field research.

In terms of exploring the rhetoric of presence, pairing the films gave my students the opportunity to see how someone's physical presence in their work (in the case of documentary) alters the way the story is told and influences what's made present in the work. The next step in the assignment's sequence asked my students to compose an analysis of a nature documentary that they selected:

> Nature films and television shows share many of the same hands-on methods used by anthropologists and others conducting ethnographic research. This part of our unit on hands-on methods asks you to compose an original analysis of a television nature program or a feature-length nature documentary. The focus of your analysis should be the ways that the filmmakers and hosts/presenters (these are sometimes the same people, sometimes not) develop a sense of personal presence. Put another way, this assignment asks how the on- or off-camera presence of filmmakers, hosts, and presenters influences and shapes the way we see and understand documentary subjects (whether these subjects are penguins or the shrinking Louisiana bayous). As you develop a draft and revise your work, be sure to describe and analyze specific moments, presentation methods, styles, and techniques.

Together, the steps in the assignment sequence gave my students experience with the way the rhetoric of presence is created and the ways in which, even in documentaries, filmmakers mediate our understanding of their subject. Additionally, the nature program analysis gave them experience understanding how others transform hands-on research into a finished work. As a way to synthesize the work from previous assignments and give my students their own experience with hands-on research methods, I asked them complete the following:

> Each of us will develop five field guide entries on biotic ("living"), abiotic ("non-living"), or built parts of the East Tennessee environment. The work we do for the other two assignments

> should help develop our sense of what kind of work field guides do. All entries *must start* with first-hand field experience (think about, for example, the tree sketches and written descriptions we composed a few weeks back) and I expect you to *keep and hold on to* your field notes, drawings, photographs, video clips, and sound recordings that document the hands-on research you've conducted. Only after completing an initial draft entry should you turn to other forms of research like the library and other field guides. Format, layout, and design will be up to you in consultation with me, but each entry must include text and at least one other medium (photographs, illustration, audio, video, etc.). We will discuss considerations of style and organization in class, but here are the minimum requirements for each entry: common name (or names) and scientific name, text-based description of at least 100 words, inclusion of one other form of media to document the subject, use of two different fonts, and attention to basic principles of effective design.

This assignment sequence provides some sense of how we can usefully incorporate lessons related to the rhetoric of presence and teach narrative nonfiction (in this case film) in the composition class. We could easily create an alternative sequence that accomplishes the same goals. Instead of analyzing nature documentaries, we might ask our composition students to analyze travel brochures for local attractions, landmarks, or historic sites. In a second step, students would then compare these documents to their own experiences with these locations.

Students and Narratives of Place

As I suggested earlier in this chapter, there has already been a great deal of theoretical, critical, and interpretive work done related to how place influences what we do and could do as teachers and students in the writing classroom. There is even a fair amount of published and presented work connected in various ways to place-based writing and

composition studies. The existence of such organizations as Association for the Study of Literature and Environment and the ASLE special interest group that meets at the annual convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication also suggests the growth of this trend. What's yet to emerge, however, is a large body of more formalized research connected to the role of place in the writing classroom.

There is some movement in that direction. Nedra Reynolds' work is one example. Her book, *Geographies of Writing*, explores similar ground to this work, but approaches the subject with a different set of terms and a different perspective. Reynolds bases her work in cultural geography. More important, perhaps, than the theoretical and rhetorical connections between her work and this study is that the core of the book comes from her qualitative research in Britain that develops "the argument that composition studies needs cultural writing theories and material literacy practices that engage with the metaphorical—ways to imagine space—without ignoring places and spaces—the actual locations where writers write, learners learn, and workers work" (3). It is an excellent addition to classroom-based research by Derek Owens, Randall Roorda, and Annie Ingram. There is even as least one recent dissertation, Arlene Plevin's *Writing, Self, and Community: The Ethical Rhetoric of Place*, that looks at the role of place as a critical category within the composition classroom.

This work also offers some initial steps toward a discussion of emergent genres that result, perhaps, from "such cases where writers and readers are violating, challenging, or changing the connection of a genre to a situation" (Devitt 22). I think, for instance, of Junger and Krakauer's introductory explanations of how the narratives that

follow may be signs of a new genre, responding to the recent crisis of ethics in nonfiction storytelling. We can also think of the ways in which more traditional, print forms of narratives of place are responding to the immediacy of digital genres like blogs. Additionally, there is room for expanded research on what we might call the "pilgrimage effect" explored in chapters four and five as it relates to ethos. Not only could such research highlight writer-reader interaction, it could also explore a sense of ethical obligation for both writers and readers. The assignments and courses I have mentioned above are all pilot versions. As a next step, I look forward to bringing my research on the rhetoric of presence into the classroom as a more formal, classroom-based research project. This project would seek to answer at least two related questions. First, how do students actually use the constituent strategies of the rhetoric of presence before they formally study them? Second, in what ways does a combination of field study and formal examination of the ways others writers use the rhetoric of presence influence student writing? I want to end this dissertation, however, with one final example of my work with creative nonfiction in the classroom.

Enhancing "Chameleon Vision"

In *Composition and Sustainability: Teaching for a Threatened Generation*, Derek Owens argues for the inclusion of sustainability as an element of curriculum and course design. While most of the book focuses on his justifications for incorporating sustainability into English Studies (specifically, but not exclusively composition), he's careful to add:

> I don't want this book to be written just for an audience of ecocritics, ecocompositionists, environmental educators, and those who situate themselves in various "eco" disciplines…[T] he people I'm really hoping to make contact with are teachers and students who are living in the suburbs and cities, *who are unhappy with the status of their neighborhoods and communities, who are frustrated with the nature of their workplaces, and who are worried about their futures and their kids' futures*. (xi-xii, emphasis added)

Like Owens, I hope to make contact and "stimulate readers who are not inclined to think about sustainability or consider the extent to which it might play a vital role in students' lives and in our own curricular objectives" (xii). Owens never mentions utopianism or utopia in his preface. In fact, it's not until Appendix A, while describing a specific assignment sequence, that he mentions utopia and its variant eutopia. Throughout the book, however, he engages in the "social dreaming" as well as the reasoning and action that Lyman Tower Sargent says can sometimes follow such dreaming (4). In this way, sustainability studies and practice, as described by Owens and others, are forms of utopian thinking.

Owens offers the chameleon as a mascot for his book, because "the image of a chameleon 'becoming one' with its environment is an attractive one for a book…which argues that learning how to live sustainability ought to be our primary cultural concern and, as such, must play a central role in our curricula" (8). This image operates as a foundation for his utopian vision: an academy that practices, preaches, and teaches sustainability. It is the second reason that Owen gives for using the chameleon as a mascot that connects to my classes and a desire for my students to develop a practical utopian vision. He writes, "the mechanically separate eyes of the chameleon, when not

working in tandem to zero in on an unsuspecting bug, can literally look forward and backward at the same time" and sees this as "a metaphor for gazing simultaneously into two very different futures" (8-9).

In this metaphor, one eye represents a hopeful version of the future. "This eye is unabashedly committed to imagining and creating, as awkward as this sounds, something like a better future for the people it encounters on a daily basis—family friends, and students" (9). The other eye is the "pessimistic eye" that sees current cultural practice and "arrives at unsettling conclusions" (9). As they enter college, students often bring with them strong pessimism and cynicism. To be sure, this pessimism, in my classes at least, is connected to the fact that composition and nature writing satisfy mandatory university requirements. Students see writing as a chore, as something they're "not good at," and as something that serves little or no purpose "in the real world." The pessimism is also connected to the world and community outside themselves: a laundry list of external pressures. What many of them are missing is the "optimistic eye" and models for combining the two views into one practical utopian vision that can help them to navigate their lives more successfully. To this end, I've designed classes and lessons that help students refocus the pessimistic eye, and to understand and begin to see with the hopeful half of chameleon vision (and its practical application).

Nature Writing: Seeing the World in "Chameleon Vision"

Nature Writing was the first class to which I brought the idea of chameleon vision. My hope was to introduce students to nature writing as a distinct form of nonfiction, discuss

several nature writers as a way to provide students with a sense of the variety within the form, and allow students to produce their own, original works of nature writing.

As a starting point, we read and examined Thomas Lyon's "A Taxonomy of Nature Writing." The short work introduced students to a common set of terms, mainly Lyon's assertion that every work of nature writing "has three main dimensions to it: natural history information, personal responses to nature, and philosophical interpretation" (20). The class then explored the taxonomy, which includes everything from field guides (*Audubon*, *Sibley's*, etc.) and natural history writing (Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us*) to works that investigate connections between humans and nature (like "The American Geographies" by Barry Lopez or Garry Synder's *The Practice of the Wild*).

After this definitional introduction, the class moved to a standard mixture of readings, and discussions, and workshops. However, I also wanted students to develop a longer-term, open-ended project. To this end, students completed a semester-long assignment sequence where they investigate the links between themselves, their campus, and their community. This may seem a long way from utopian thinking, but there are connections. As Thomas Lyon writes, "the crucial point about nature writing is the awakening of perception to an ecological way of seeing. 'Ecological' here is meant to characterize the capacity to notice patterns in nature, and community, and to recognize that the patterns radiate outward to include the human observer" ("Preface" x). In this way, nature writing doesn't have to be a course in sustainability; but nature writing's focus on ecology, on connections, is also the foundation for sustainability. Likewise, and perhaps pedagogically more importantly, a nature writing course can been seen as a course in

applied utopian thinking. By observing and understanding existing patterns in nature (including the personal and cultural patterns), nature writing and nature writers can imagine future patterns. The class read and discussed Lyon's taxonomy and examples of each of the forms, but it was in the process of composing their own work—including the semester-long sequence—that students began to see and articulate the patterns for themselves.

The assignment sequence began with students conducting several "backyard observations" as a way to get them familiar with the process. Even this seemingly simple exercise moves students toward seeing with the "optimistic eye" of chameleon vision. In order to know what your environment or community could or should look like, you need to know what it *does* look like.

Once students were comfortable with the basic skill of close observation, we brought the assignment from the backyard to the campus. I divided our core campus into 20 equal sections; each of these sections included a mixture of built and natural environments. Student then selected one of these sections to observe for the remainder of the semester. (It's important to note that Florida Gulf Coast University was experiencing what the university president described as an "aggressive growth" phase.) By composing weekly entries, students gained first-hand experience with careful observation; it offered students a way to practice transcribing the "natural history information" Lyon mentions. Except for general directions regarding careful observation, students were free to observe what they would.

A month before the end of the semester, I supplied this assignment:

> During the last two class meetings, we'll discuss ideas and issues related to shaping your campus observations and the related journal entries into a short, coherent essay. You'll turn this essay in at the end of the last class session. Here are *some* questions to get you thinking: What is your ideal relationship with nature? To what extent is our campus an example of nature? To what extent is our campus an example of civilization/human development? Does your part of the campus include a habitat that existed before the university was built?

After setting the general focus for the essay, I asked students to compose a series of reflections linking their observations to Lyon's two remaining terms, personal reflection and philosophical interpretation:

> Connect your specific campus observation site to the rest of campus. How does your "part" fit into the whole? Connect your specific campus observation site to the rest of Southwest Florida. Connect your specific campus observation site to the rest of Florida. In class, we discussed a balance between nature and civilization/development. In this entry compare your campus observation site (as an example of one of these terms) to a specific location in Southwest Florida that's an example of the other term. Imagine what the campus (or the other location you mention in the previous entry) will look like in the future.

On the last day of class, we engaged in a discussion based on student responses to these questions. I then asked students to respond to the following four questions as a way to shape their final essay:

> Using your campus observations and reflections, develop your position on the connection between our campus, natural, and constructed landscapes. What two campus observations best explain or support your discussion and position? Which of the last five journal entries is the best example of your position? Respond to the argument in Lopez's "The American Geographies."

The argument the assignment refers to begins after Lopez has said, "I know that in a truly national literature there should be odes to the Triassic reds of the Colorado Plateau, to the sharp and ghostly light of the Florida Keys, to the aeoloian soils of southern Minnesota and the Palouse in Washington" (135). That is, a national literature is incomplete without a comprehensive, and poetic, natural history. This is followed by the passage I referred to earlier in this dissertation:

> One cannot acknowledge the extent and the history of this kind of testimony without being forced to the realization that something strange, if not dangerous, is afoot. Year by year, the number of people with firsthand experience in the land dwindles…In the wake of this loss of personal and local knowledge, the knowledge from which a real geography is derived, the knowledge on which a country must stand, has come hard to define but I think sinister and unsettling—the packaging and marketing of land as a form of entertainment. (135)

Re-vision

One expectation I had was that students would connect to the hopefulness in the Lopez essay and that they might see their campus observations as small steps toward recording a "personal and local knowledge." Since it was the first time I'd tried such an assignment, and the first time I had taught this particular class, I likely had unrealistic expectations.

What the assignment sequence demonstrated was the difficulty of getting lower-level students to move beyond their pessimism. In fact, many of my students composed essays that were some version of "it's horrible to see nature destroyed by development." One student wrote that he looked forward to getting out of Florida before it was "completely built up," but didn't imagine the possibility that, in contrast to other parts of

the state and country, Southwest Florida might actually be less developed. Even many of their campus observations were flavored with reflections about the inevitability of a fully built-up campus and surrounding community.

In retrospect, this is perhaps a limitation of making the essay portion of the assignment an in-class activity. Another reason for the number of responses that approached the assignment in a narrow way may have been the wording of the original essay and journal prompts. These things may have led students to compose their essays using a stock rhetorical mode: comparison and contrast. In fairness to the assignment, the students' essays may also have been the result of the difficulty of utopian thinking or the comfort students have for letting the distopic, pessimistic side of chameleon vision dominate their focus.

Having students consciously develop the hopeful, *eu*topian half of chameleon vision may require a depth of place-based understanding that student may not be able to acquire in such a narrowly defined assignment. Future versions of the assignment might ask students to work in groups, or as an entire class, to share and link their observations and then develop outlets to share these ideas and information with the university and surrounding community. This is a version of the project Bradley John Monsma describes using with his students. For most students, my invisible utopian methodology didn't seem effective. With this in mind, and based on the actual essays students wrote, it seems worthwhile to reconfigure the observing-reflecting-dreaming sequence and the class to make this methodology more obvious and give students a better sense that the hopeful half of chameleon vision is worth developing and strengthening.

Sargent says, "I like to think of [utopia] as a distorting mirror in reverse showing how good we could look…Utopia caters to our ability to dream, to recognize that things are not quite what they should be, and to assert that improvement is possible" (25-26). This is exactly the kind of reflection Lopez offers in "The American Geographies." Perhaps, then, the best place to begin this assignment is at the end, or nearly the end. Instead of starting with direct (backyard and campus) observation, students can begin the assignment sequence by composing a response to the prompt that asks them to consider what their campus will look like in the future. Class discussion would then focus on the reasoning behind student responses, which, based on the previous version of the class, would reveal their pessimism. After this discussion, the class would explore utopian ideas and the usefulness of nature writing as a form that can both acknowledge pessimism and offer hope. Then, I would formally introduce the semester long observing-reflecting-dreaming sequence as a way for students to become familiar with the various parts of Lyon's taxonomy and begin "the awakening of perception to an ecological way of seeing" mentioned in his preface. Approached in this way, the sequence isn't simply another assignment that students "have to complete." Instead, it becomes a central part of the class, a tool that allows them to develop their writing and critical thinking skills, see the "work" that goes into a finished nature essay (including their other course assignments), and compare their ideas and methods to the other writers we read as part of the class.

Several texts offer better fits for this new model of the assignment sequence and its role in an introductory writing course. Paul Krafel's *Seeing Nature* provides many

examples of careful observation and offers an articulate and readable version of Lyon's "awakening." David Petersen's *Writing Naturally* moves toward the "introduction" part of the course, offering a humorous and useful initiation to nature writing and the nuts and bolts of composition. Finch and Elder's *The Norton Book of Nature Writing*, because of the number of selections it offers, should help students explore the breadth of nature writing through Lyon's taxonomy.

While not all colleges and universities offer nature writing as part of the regular curriculum, there are possibilities for using observation-reflection-dreaming assignments in composition classes. At least one of the many ecocomposition readers offers a similar campus-based utopian sequence. As part of *Constructing Nature*, Richard Jenseth and Edward E. Lotto provide a five-part sequence that asks students to move from objective description, to interpretation, history, and, finally, to "an essay…in which you imagine the future of your campus" (482-84). There's also versions of this assignment that moves off-campus to observe and research the "History of Place" (Poster).Nature writing and the assignment sequence I've described (or a similar sequence in other classes) offer ways to tap into the hopeful half of chameleon vision. The essay that completes the sequence also functions as an assessment tool. In addition, in-depth classroom discussions and writing assignments connected to the rhetoric of presence can help students tap into Owens' hopeful half of chameleon vision. I suggest this because students, particularly first-year students, often have little connection to the campus and community of which they are a part. Examining how other writers use and abuse the rhetoric of presence can be a first step toward encouraging them to see, feel, and

experience, and write their environments—much like my earlier nature writing students did—in a way that leads to hopefulness and a well-developed sense of place. As Lyman Tower Sargent writes, "Faith or hope in the future breeds effort. Effort is more likely to produce positive results than no effort. Apathy produces only more apathy" (27). It is my hope to open my students' eyes to what can yet be achieved in their community and their world, to spur them on to communicate this possibility to others through their writing, and to awaken in them faith and hope in their own futures.

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VITA

Bill Doyle was born in Annapolis, Maryland and spent his early years living and working near Chesapeake Bay's western shore. He completed a B.A. in English from University of Maryland, Baltimore County in 1991 and his M.A. in English from Claremont Graduate School in 1992. In 1994, he moved to Ireland to pursue a M.Phil. in Anglo-Irish Literature at Trinity College Dublin, which he completed in 1996. After teaching in Fort Myers Florida, he entered the Ph.D. program in English at the University of Tennessee. He is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Tampa.