

**Deromanticizing California:  
Non-Harmonious Ecology in California Literature**

**Daichi SUGAI**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Letters**

**Graduate School of  
Languages and Cultures,  
Nagoya University**

**November 2020**

## Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: An Environment Mediated by Petroleum in Upton Sinclair's <i>Oil!</i> .....	29
Chapter 2: The Failure of Solidarity: Intolerant Agricultural Capitalism in John Steinbeck's <i>Of Mice and Men</i> .....	49
Chapter 3: The Antithesis to American Wilderness: Jack Kerouac's Mental Breakdown and the Representation of Nature in <i>Big Sur</i> .....	70
Chapter 4: Richard Brautigan's Deconstruction of the Romantic View of Nature in <i>A Confederate General from Big Sur</i> and <i>Trout Fishing in America</i> .....	90
Chapter 5: Reconceptualization of Environmental Exclusion in Cynthia Kadohata's <i>In the Heart of the Valley of Love</i> .....	111
Conclusion.....	132
Notes.....	140
Bibliography.....	149

## **Introduction**

### **The Romantic View of Nature**

The purpose of this dissertation is to scrutinize literary imagining which tries to deromanticize the representation of California and the possibility of non-anthropocentric representation of the place. California is a realm upon which those who come from outside of the state tend to project their ideals: in other words, human desires have been inscribed on the land. Romantic imagining of California which imposes an anthropocentric view on the place, however, reduces the possibilities in representing it. This dissertation argues that deromanticizing aspects of California literature will help to supplant a way of thinking in which the place is subordinated to humans. It may thereby facilitate broader exploration of the imaginative potential around California. To elucidate a literary desire which discharges the land from the burden of anthropocentrism, I would like to argue that the representation of bodies and minds in California literature which disturbs the rigid border between “internal” and “external” implies an interconnection between humans and non-humans. Reconceptualizing human subjectivity in terms of an interaction with others demotes privileged human subjectivity and questions an anthropocentric perspective on California which subordinates the place to human ideals. Although previous research of California literature has pointed out that California had followed the dream of a balanced interaction between humans and non-humans based on a romantic view of nature and the image of the frontier, some literature of California suggests resistance to the romantic discourse. To deconstruct the romantic image of California, the current ecocritical perspective, seeking to override the romantic nature/culture dichotomy and proposing a

transversal alliance of humans and non-humans, can be applied to California literature.

The romantic view of nature consists of the notion that nature is “good” for humans as opposed to the realm of “evil” civilization, and the recognition of nature as a “good” entity reinforces the creed of environmentalism which denounces anthropogenic environmental crisis. Some scholars, such as Jonathan Bate, Donald Worster and Dana Phillips, point out that the romantic view of nature advocates that the realm of nature represents ethical and aesthetic excellence in opposition to morally flawed civilization (Bate 9; Worster 312; Phillips 3). In addition, Timothy Morton, a philosopher and ecocritic, in his *Ecology without Nature*, observes the influence of the romantic view of nature on environmentalism and critically investigates the concept of nature (1). Indeed, the border between nature and culture is vague since the romantic concept of nature stands for both ideas of essential nature as opposed to civilization and nature as culturally constructed. However, the idea of nature/culture dichotomy supports the environmental awareness which advocates back-to-nature tendencies that assume and idealize primitive nature, as James C. McKusick asserts: “the idyllic Romantic conception of the natural world as a place of vital sustenance and peaceful coexistence is complemented by its nightmare vision of a world threatened by imminent environmental catastrophe” (29).<sup>1</sup>

The romantic environmental discourse presumes dichotomies such as good/bad, natural/unnatural and purity/pollution with hierarchical assumptions. Lawrence Buell’s concept of “toxic discourse” is one of the anthropocentric examples of environmental thought. He regards pollution as a common enemy and urges solidarity of all humans beyond race, nationality, gender and class (*Writing* 34). Although Buell’s concept fosters human solidarity toward an environment endangered by human activities, toxicity implies that it is harmful for human beings and for a harmonious ecosystem. Exclusion of what

is assumed to be harmful to a harmonious relationship between humans and nature, however, leads to reinforcing the hierarchy in human society. Sarah Jaquette Ray, for example, makes the criticism that “environmentalism espouses social and ecological harmony, yet it reinforces many social hierarchies” (17). Her argument focuses on disgust in environmental discourses regarding threats to nature and discloses that “mainstream environmentalism is promoted along lines of ‘purity and pollution’” (1). That is, hoping for a “good environment” consists of the idea of excluding “bad” things according to a cultural norm. In this sense, when I use the term “harmony” in this dissertation, it indicates an anthropocentric perspective which advocates an anti-polluted and ecologically balanced society for humans.

The romantic environmentalism which appraises the virtue of nature seems to be haunted by a human fear of losing harmony with nature. As Wallace Stegner asserts, the realm of nature has formed the American mindset and history, so the core of American identity is related to the natural landscape (175-6). His idea of the wilderness conspicuously exhibits the essence of an ecocentric mode of environmentalism. On the other hand, Leo Marx states that American writers envision a “middle landscape, a rural nation exhibiting a happy balance of art and nature” (226). His observation on American pastoralism in the nineteenth century exhibits the tension between ecocentric and technocentric modes of American environmentalism. Although the border of these binary concepts is vague, American environmentalism assumes that these ideas of the environment are ideally balanced. Romantic environmentalism is, therefore, reluctant to run to an extreme: in other words, an ideology of environmentalism intends to exclude enemies of human welfare in order to build a balanced system between humans and nature.

### **The Definition of California Environmental Literature**

California has been an open space upon which people have cast their desires to achieve their ideals. California, according to Jon Christensen, “has long borne the burden of America’s dreams,” and the state is the “end of the trail for that particularly American story, where the frontier ran out of space and time” (484). While California is a real place, it also has accepted the role of “an imagined place of the same name,” as James Quay points out:

When commentators attempt to define California, they use *powerful human metaphors such as Paradise, Eden, El Dorado – all places that exist in the imagination*, places challenging people to find them, to lose them, to regain them. . . . California affords observes here and abroad an opportunity to think upon human possibility and its limits. (5; emphasis added)

According to Quay, people have projected their dreams of achieving their ideal upon the land of California, and the human metaphors of California originate from the California Gold Rush in 1849. Quay argues that the Gold Rush history of the state has attracted immigrants who “pursue many versions of ‘gold’: opportunities, artistic or economic; freedoms, political or sexual; or openness, geographic or intellectual” (8).<sup>2</sup>

With respect to the characteristics of California, Joan Didion, a conspicuous Californian writer, observes that “here [California] is the last stop for all those who come from somewhere else, for all those who drifted away from the cold and the past and the old ways. Here is where they are trying to find a new life style. . .” (4). Her notion of California, which evokes the image of the last frontier for those who want to reenact a

new life, seems to be applicable even in the twenty-first century. For instance, Peggy Orenstein, in her essay in *The New York Times Magazine* in 2010, remarks of the California dream as follows:

California has always been as much a state of mind as a state of the Union. Other places have sunshine. Other places have beaches. Other places even have decent organic produce, or so they say. But California promises something more: transformation. *The state is the repository of America's frontier spirit, the notion that a better life is possible for anyone who wants it, regardless of the circumstances of her birth.* You can leave your past at the border and reinvent yourself here. . . . (Orenstein par. 2; emphasis added)

She mentions the diverse landscape of California and regards the state as the “repository of American frontier spirit.” As Didion and Orenstein point out, California provides those who come from the outside of the state with the hope for a new life.

The land of California is, in other words, a realm on which human desires have been inscribed, and it is California literature that describes such anthropocentric projections on the place. As Susan Kollin, in “Environments in Western American Literature,” states, “for many European Americans, the West was thought to be a site of possibility, a place of beginnings, and an escape from the perceived exhaustion of the Old World or the overdeveloped American East,” and “it was understood as a terrain of promise, potential wealth, and the future” (par. 1). On the other hand, from the point of view of those who continue to arrive from other directions, such as Asians, Africans, Hispanics and so forth, the West or California is “not the end of the line” but “the point

of arrival in the new world” (Hicks, “General Introduction” 8). California thus entails not only Eurocentric views, such as the garden of Eden, El Dorado and the frontier, but also romantic images of creating new life. I would like to call these anthropocentric projections on California which render the place significant “the romantic image of California” because those who come from outside of the state more or less tend to project their dreams upon California and romanticize the state as a realm where they can test the possibility or the limit of their dreams.

Although it is difficult to define California literature since literary works related to the state vary, I would like to follow a definition given in the anthology *The Literature of California*:

In our view, it is not so much a matter of an author’s birthplace or time in residence as it is the nature of the writing itself. We have looked for works that in content or in method or in sensibility have some relevant tie to or engagement with the region’s past or present life. (Hicks, “General Introduction” 10)

California literature in this dissertation is thus defined as literary works which portray personal California experiences of those who come from outside of the state. Given that the romantic image of California is often formed from an outsider’s point of view and the concept of the frontier implies migration from outside of the state, it is important to scrutinize the description of the environment of California from the point of view of outsiders in order to disclose that some literary works show a critical stance in relation to the romantic image of California.

California literature often suggests writers’ notions about the environment because

the place has been “deeply involved in environmental conflict” (Love 4). Jack Hicks regards one of the themes of California literature as “the struggle for control of the land and for shares of its vast resources” (“General Introduction” 6). As he points out, literary works of California, such as Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona*, Frank Norris’s *The Octopus* and Upton Sinclair’s *Oil!*, deal with the issue of “land abuse, exploitation, enormous theft, and epic encounter” (6). Given that California writers tend to depict the relationship between humans and the land of California, which includes non-human entities, it is understandable that Steven Frye asserts “eco-critical considerations would become an important avenue of scholarly endeavor” in the field of California literature (6).<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, this dissertation interprets some outsiders’ literary works of California in the twentieth century which critically describe the relationship between humans and the environment from the ecocritical perspective. For example, Upton Sinclair’s *Oil!* (1927) casts doubt on the Southern California sunshine myth which had been promoted by *The Land of Sunshine* magazine from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century: “Southern California could be freer, more joyous, and more expansive than life in the East or Midwest because it was a life lived with the sun” (Starr, *Inventing* 83). After the Great Depression, John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* (1937) discloses the limitation of a migrant worker dream which presumes a harmonious relationship between humans and nature by portraying the oppression of the socially disadvantaged by the agricultural capitalist society. In the era of the counterculture when the environmental movement had risen as one of the ways of the liberation of the oppressed (Guha 1; Nash, *Rights* 11-12), Jack Kerouac’s *Big Sur* (1962), Richard Brautigan’s *A Confederate General from Big Sur* (1964) and *Trout Fishing in America* (1967) criticize traditional notions of praise for nature by depicting the protagonist’s personal experience in the West Coast area.

Moreover, Cynthia Kadohata's *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* (1992), portraying environmental degradation in Los Angeles, is no longer based on the Southern California sunshine myth, but her writing shows an acceptance of desolation which has the possibility of overriding the romantic image of California. These writers are generally outsiders of California. Sinclair was originally from Maryland and moved to California in the 1920s. Kerouac was also from the east coast although he temporarily stayed in California. Brautigan was originally from Washington and settled in San Francisco in the 1950s. Kadohata was born in Chicago and moved through some southern states in her childhood, now living in Los Angeles.

One exception is Steinbeck, who was born in Salinas, California. Although he is a native Californian writer, one of his works, *Of Mice and Men*, focuses on migrant workers who come from the outside of the state and Steinbeck's view of outsiders discloses the harsh reality of migratory dreamers. According to Morris Dickstein, Steinbeck's articles about the migrant farmworkers for the *San Francisco News* and *The Nation* "mark his transformation from a detached observer to an indignant muckraker and reformer exposing the human costs of the system" (75), and Steinbeck "went from seeing the migrant workers from the outside as social victims, objects of pity or exploitation, to identifying with them as besieged individuals and seeing the world through their eyes" (125). Steinbeck's close attention to the migrant workers, in other words, seemed to promote a perspective of identifying and empathizing with them as oppressed individuals. This dissertation thus takes up Steinbeck's work as California literature which suggests the view of outsiders in California.

As I scrutinize below, the previous research of California literature has pointed out that literary works which deal with California as a setting are often based on the mixed

idea of the concept of the frontier and that of American environmentalism. The fusion of the frontier and environmentalism has developed one of the conspicuous themes of California literature; the natural landscape of California enables people to reenact the myth of the garden of Eden which stands for a harmonious community of humans and non-humans.

Some literary works of California, however, resist the outsiders' romantic views of California, especially in terms of its environment. Although the abundant nature of California provides outsiders with the hope of constructing ideal places, literary works in this dissertation suggest that the reality of the relationship between humans and nature does not necessarily achieve the ideal based on the romantic image of California. As I argue below, this dissertation aims to reveal that their descriptions of bodies and minds suggest the relationship between humans and the environment is not necessarily harmonious: in other words, that their treatment of the environment of California offers resistance to the romantic image of California. The relationship of bodies, minds and the environment in these literary works of California reveals a posthuman possibility of deromanticizing descriptions of California. Disturbing the border between "internal" and "external" through personal experiences of California, some California novels suggest a non-anthropocentric way of representation of the place which has been burdened with anthropocentric romantic images.

### **California Literary Studies and Romantic Imaginations**

In the twentieth century, studies of California literature have intermittently thrived. Previous research often points out that California literature has been closely related to Frederick Jackson Turner's concept of the frontier. Turner's *The Frontier in American*

*History* in 1921 defines one of the American characteristics as the process of moving the frontier line and the desire for rebirth:

American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial *rebirth*, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. (1-2; emphasis added)

He regards the westward expansion as repetitive zero-based development; that is, once pioneers have established the “civilization,” they continually look for other “primitive” areas to develop and settle. This repetitive process of exploration is more clearly stated in the latter part of Turner’s essay:

The wilderness disappears, the “West” proper passes on to a new frontier, and in the former area, a new society has emerged from its contact with the backwoods. Gradually this society loses its primitive conditions, and assimilates itself to the type of the older social conditions of the East; but it bears within it enduring and distinguishing survivals of its frontier experience. Decade after decade, West after West, this *rebirth* of American society has gone on, has left its traces behind it, and has reacted on the East. (205; emphasis added)

The word “rebirth” seems to be a key concept of frontier experiences. As Kollin states, many writers have depicted the American West as “a place of rugged retreat and rejuvenation from a hyper-modernizing and diminished world” (65), and Turner’s concept of “rebirth” seems to resonate with this description of the landscape of the West. His frontier theory suggests that pioneers of the westward movement have tried to build a society on the frontier line. The characteristic of the frontier is thus defined as a repetitive process of expedition and the establishment of a new society; in other words, the hope for adventures and creating an ideal community is foregrounded in Turner’s concept. As I discuss below, this concept is applied to previous interpretations of California literature.

In the first half of the twentieth century, studies of California literature were based on the frontier theory. Franklin Walker mainly pays attention to the writers’ involvement in San Francisco’s “unusual cultural flowering,” or in “a pioneer city” (*San Francisco’s* xvii-xviii), and subsequently examines literature of the region which “constitutes a physiographic and climatic area distinct in its characteristics” (*Literary History* 2). When he mentions the writers and the dwellers in the area, he foregrounds their movement across the vast natural landscape, such as the mountains and the desert, to settle down in Southern California. His statement that “a study of the literature of Southern California is to a very large extent a study of transplantation” (*Literary History* 3) reflects the characteristic of Californians that many of them are basically immigrants from other areas. The rhetoric of this passage implies that pioneers survive the long severe trail and find a place of cultural grafting; that is, he regards Southern California as a cite of exploration. In addition, Edmund Wilson argues that California “has always presented itself to Americans as one of the strangest and most exotic of our adventures; and it is the duty of the literary artist, precisely, to struggle with new phases of experience, and to give them

beauty and sense” (63). Walker and Wilson seemingly define the writers of California as literary pioneers who explore and inscribe their new experiences in California.

With respect to the relationship between the imagination of frontier experiences and the land of California, the romantic image of California in the early twentieth century was intimately related to its abundant natural landscape. For instance, McKusick’s *Romanticism and Ecology* perceives a romantic tradition which “emanates from the English Lake District to the shore of Walden Pond and thence to the Big Wilderness of the American West” (McKusick 6). Moreover, Kevin Starr, in his *Americans and the California Dream 1850-1915*, which is one of his multivolume historical researches on the California dream, asserts that the core of the California dream is “the hope for a special relationship to nature” (417). In terms of attractiveness of nature in California, Steven Gilbar states that “the special quality of California’s landscape has affected all sorts of writers, not all of whom fall into the category of ‘nature writer’ or ‘naturalist’” (1). In addition, Michael Kowalewski states that “most earlier nature writers still felt confident in celebrating the power, beauty and resiliency of the California landscape” (343). That is, the natural landscape of California has inspired the imagination of writers.

The romantic image of California as a state of nature, however, seems to be no longer available. Quay briefly traces changes of definitions of California after the 1930s:

The rise of Hollywood as the center of motion pictures added images of urban glamour to the definition of California, while the Great Depression of the 1930s added images of rural misery and labor struggle. In the aftermath of World War II, California was no longer seen as a pre-industrial Garden of Eden. Driven by scientific and technological advances during and after the war, California was the

place where the future begins. (8)

Although California could be no longer represented as a simple image of a natural state in the late twentieth century because of urbanization, flourishing capitalism and consumer culture, technological development including the dot-com boom and environmental degradation, California still “has stood in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as the place where liberalism and capitalism’s promise of egalitarian access to the pursuit of happiness glitters in the sunshine” (Gudis 42).

While images of California have changed through history, Turner’s frontier concept lingered in studies of California literature in the late twentieth century. William Everson argues that some writers, such as Norris, Muir, Steinbeck and some Beat writers, follow the frontier spirit to distinguish their aesthetic quest from the “sophisticated” East where the essence of Europe markedly remains: “the American writer, *following the lead of the frontiersman*, who, as conformism rigidified behind him, was impelled into a deepening penetration of the Wilderness, responded by transmuting the apothecic quest into correspondingly elemental literary forms” (11; emphasis added). Stoddard Martin regards California as “the melting-pot of the melting-pot and with its large population of blacks, Mexicans and Orientals, the first frontier of the racial multilateralism typical of the twentieth century” (4-5). He pays attention to the writers’ testing-place experiences and elucidates that some writers, such as London and Norris, depict an idealized individualism which could be achieved in the pastoral landscape. According to him, the writers foreground “the cult of the young man in harmony with nature” (12).

On the other hand, David Wyatt argues that California literature depicts the landscape of California as an image of Eden which has already been lost. Although he

points out that California literature celebrates “the spiritual liberation conferred by a particular California region” and “attempts to find hope in a place where history seems to be ending” (xvii), he finally points out the complication of the representation of the landscape:

The space we call “landscape” is, from the fully human standpoint, an illusion of the given world on which we depend, but an illusion in which we cannot finally dwell. In its apparent stability and concreteness, landscape is the most widely available donor of the experience we call “presence,” and its peculiar fate is therefore to arouse our longing for all in human life that is or can be absent and lost. (210)

The landscape of California evokes a sense of loss which is based on the illusion that California primarily enables the dwellers to achieve their hope for liberation through the process of apotheosis of the region. That is, Wyatt expounds the view that the representation of California is largely based on the west as it is idealized by Turner. Taking Wyatt’s interpretation of the landscape into account, David Fine and Paul Skenazy observe that “if the California mythology is one of hopes dashed and of disappointment . . . it is also a story that insists on hope and possibility, and posits the landscape as a promise of renewal” (17). Their term “a promise of renewal” obviously resonates with Turner’s concept of the frontier proffering the “rebirth” of the society.

The previous perspective of California literature is based on an idea of renewal of one’s lifestyle. One of the conspicuous themes of California literature, which according to Turner’s frontier theory deals with human struggles over the landscape and presumes

the rejuvenation of individuals and society through confronting primitive nature of the West, is closely related to environmental awareness. On the one hand, encountering the vast landscape of California enables pioneers to fulfill their desire for abundant nature, which evokes an image of Eden that leads them to worship the vast natural landscape of California. Their intention to reenact the Edenic myth through development, on the other hand, suggests the ideology of technological harmonization of humans and non-humans.<sup>4</sup>

Jack London's *The Valley of the Moon* (1913), which depicts a married couple's wandering in Sonoma County, California, for instance, appraises the virtue of nature. This novel portrays the couple Billy and Saxon looking for ideal farmland with "proper soil" which they finally find in the "Valley of the Moon" (London 234, 393). Although their acquaintance, Mr. Hall, criticizes inequality in chance of success on the frontier and points out that there is no room for late starters or losers to obtain ideal land as property, the end of the novel indicating Saxon's pregnancy suggests their successful fertility on the land in northern California. Given that Earle Labor and Jeanne Campbell Reesman observe that London is "strongly enamored of the pastoral dream" (98), Billy and Saxon's pilgrimage through the north coastal area of California and the ending indicate their hopeful way of life in the countryside embodying London's romantic idea of a harmonious lifestyle in nature. Based on an agrarian ideal, London regards nature as a realm for realizing a pastoral dream which assumes modest alteration of the landscape.

While London's pastoral ideal consists of an ecocentric mode derived from a romantic view of nature, the environmental awareness of California literature has another aspect which asserts the harmonization of humans and non-humans by technological development. Andrew Kirk, observing the environmental policies of the counterculture in the 1960s, points out that they embraced the "seemingly contradictory notion that the

antimodernist desire to return to a simpler time when humans were more closely tied to nature could be achieved through technological progress” (375). Although some environmental policies of the counterculture often reject the large-scale technological system,<sup>5</sup> Kirk pays attention to the other countercultural environmentalists who focus on “alternative energy, earth-friendly design, recycling, and creative waste management as the best ways to subvert the large industrial structures they viewed as most damaging to the environment and to attempt to equalize the world power structure” (377). His observation reveals that there are some environmentalists whose policies are different from technophobic environmentalists.

As Kirk points out, there are critics who express a stance which asserts harmonization of humans and non-humans by technological development as opposed to nature-worshipping environmentalists. Murray Bookchin, a social theorist who formulated the concept of social ecology, for instance, asserts that “whether now or in the future, human relationships with nature are always mediated by science, technology and knowledge” (23). In addition, Herbert Marcuse, a philosopher of the Frankfurt School, refers to the appropriate use of technology to create a harmonized relationship between humans and nature: “‘liberation of nature’ cannot mean returning to a pre-technological stage, but advancing to the use of the achievements of technological civilization for freeing man and nature from the destructive abuse of science and technology in the service of exploitation” (*Counterrevolution* 60). Their approaches to environmental issues stress social renovation through technological development in order to solve environmental problems which seem to be mostly caused by human exploitation of nature with inappropriate use of technologies.

One example of the hope for appropriate technologies is Ernest Callenbach’s series

of utopian novels called *Ecotopia*. *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston* (1975) depicts the ways of life of post-independent Ecotopia which is formed by Washington, Oregon and California in and north of the Tehachapi Mountains from the point of view of William Weston, a journalist from the East. As Weston notes, “the Ecotopians do not feel ‘separate’ from their technology” (Callenbach, *Ecotopia* 47), suggesting their eco-friendly society does not reject technologies so much as rely on technological innovations. Based on their creed of a “stable-state system,” they create plastics which are “*biodegradable*, that is, susceptible to decay” (Callenbach, *Ecotopia* 77; emphasis in original). According to Weston’s report:

Ecotopian durable plastics, which are used for minibus bodies, “extruded houses,” coins, bottles, and mechanical objects of many kinds, have molecular structures similar to those of our plastics, and are virtually decay-proof under ordinary circumstances – in particular, so long as they are not in contact with the soil. However, *by chemical advances that have so far remained secret, Ecotopian scientists have built into these molecules “keyholes,” which can be opened only by soil micro-organisms!* Once they are unlocked, the whole structure decomposes rapidly. (Callenbach, *Ecotopia* 78; emphasis added)

Ecotopia’s technological development seemingly fosters their ecologically sustainable society and achieves harmonious coexistence with nature.

In subsequently published *Ecotopia Emerging* (1981), Callenbach portrays how Ecotopia becomes independent in detail. It is worth noting that one of the decisive triggers of their independence is “the cell” which would bring “a new paradigm for techno-social

innovation” (Callenbach, *Emerging* 84). Bert Luckman, a member of the Survivalist Party which plans to make the region independent from the U.S., visits the inventor Lou Swift and admires the possibility of the cell: “what pyramids were to the Egyptians or the Aztecs, or the railroad or warship to imperial Britain, or the airconditioned skyscraper to urbanizing America, Lou’s cell would be to the new society it would make possible” (Callenbach, *Emerging* 84). The new kind of energy resource from technological development provides the impetus for the independence of Ecotopia.

Callenbach’s utopia novels suggest that technological development could possibly achieve a reenactment of the Edenic myth or a society in harmony with nature. Although Wyatt points out that California literature poses a sense of loss by depicting an ideal landscape “in which we cannot finally dwell,” Ecotopia dreams such a landscape and manifests the achievement of the harmonious community created by technological development.

Although the border between ecocentric and technocentric is vague, these modes are intimately related to the treatment of the environment in California literature. California provides pioneers from the east who seek an alternative lifestyle with the promise of a brand-new lifestyle with its vast natural landscape. At the same time, on the frontier, Californians compromise with the harsh natural environment to settle there. The technocentric mode is thus based on the idea of humans living in harmony with the natural environment. The myth of the frontier in California literature tends to get the best of both environmental ideologies. In this sense, California has been a land which draws on both environmental ideologies and urges humans to compromise with the environment.

### **An Anthropocentric View of California**

The romantic image of California imposes an anthropocentric view on the land. Indeed, representations of California cannot avoid anthropocentric perspectives because representing a place is a human deed. The romantic image of the land, however, diminishes the diverse possibilities of California representations; in other words, human desires projected on the land stereotypically fix the image of California as an ideal land which provides the dwellers with a brand-new harmonious community. According to Robert T. Tally Jr. and Christine M. Battista, descriptions of geography from an anthropocentric view, “cartographic practices” in their terms, which alienate the “human subject from, and within, nature, as the mapmaker is positioned outside of the geography surveyed,” create an “abstract space” that is “cut off from the lived spaces of human interactions, as well as from the natural ecosystems.” This estrangement exacerbates “the environmental crises that have served to remind all that the conditions for thought are necessarily subordinate to, and dependent on, the condition for life” (3). Tally and Battista’s portrayal seems to be applied to the romantic image of California. Anthropocentric representations of California promote a cognition in which the place is subordinated to humans and fail to adequately describe the relationship between humans and the environment.

Frank Norris’s argument on literature of the West and his conspicuous California novel *The Octopus* (1901), for instance, foreshadow Tally and Battista’s view of human alienation in an abstract space. In his essay “The Literature of the West,” Norris criticizes William R. Lighton’s assertion that literature of the West should “picture the West as a quiet, well-ordered country” (1175), and insists that “the writer must search for the idiosyncrasy, the characteristic, that thing, that feature, element of a person that distinguishes the times or place treated of from all other times and all other places” (1176).

According to Norris, the idiosyncrasy of the West, or “the product of the West” in his terms, is “the adventurer” such as the Forty-niner (1177). Norris’s view of the characteristic of the West seems to project his romantic image of California on the land. Therefore, one can say Norris blindly creates an abstract space based on the romantic image. His novel *The Octopus* however, portrays discord between his ideal image of the West and the land of California. He gives a principal character, Magnus Derrick, “the spirit of the Adventurer,” and writes: “it was the true California spirit that found expression through him, the spirit of the West” (813). Although Magnus and other farmers embody the authentic characteristic of California which Norris believes in, their speculator temperament abuses the land of San Joaquin:

They have no love for their land. They were not attached to the soil. They worked their ranches as a quarter of a century before they had worked their mines. To husband the resources of their marvelous San Joaquin, they considered niggardly, petty, Hebraic. To get all there was out of the land, to squeeze it dry, to exhaust it, seemed their policy. When, at last, the land [was] worn out, would refuse to yield, they would invest their money in something else; by then, they would all have made fortunes. (Norris, *Octopus* 814)

Norris here describes the adventurers as exploiters of the land. That is, as Norris suggests, the romantic image of California which regards the land as a gold mine consequently detaches human minds from the land, which exacerbates the land abuse.

### **Deromanticizing California**

If the romantic imposition of human desires on the land exacerbates environmental degradation, it is worth considering literary imagining which deviates from or casts doubt on anthropocentric representations of the place while taking the current perspective of ecocriticism into account. When we think about an interaction between humans and non-humans in the Anthropocene, the romantic environmentalism advocating harmony with nature seems to be anachronistic because it reinforces an anthropocentric view of the environment.<sup>6</sup> The epoch when human impacts on the planet have become extraordinarily fatal and there is no turning back suggests that an idealistic harmony with nature, as in Eden or the middle landscape of Marx, is an illusion. However, the Anthropocene does not necessarily implant despair over the impossibility of reenactment of a harmonious relationship with nature so much as challenge the conversion of our environmental awareness. As Roy Scranton states, “the greatest challenge the Anthropocene poses may be to our sense of what it means to be human” (par. 12), to think the environment in the Anthropocene is to think ontology of humans in the interaction with non-human entities.

It should be noted that Donna Haraway from early on suggests how to evade the hierarchy in her concept of the cyborg. According to her, the concept of the cyborg, which rejects rigid dualisms which have been persistent in Western traditions, struggles against “perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly” (“Manifesto” 95). As she continues to write, “cyborg politics insist on noise and advocate pollution, rejoicing in the illegitimate fusions of animal and machine” (“Manifesto” 95), and her notion of the cyborg implies the rejection of both dualisms and harmonious idealism. Moreover, in later years, she enlarges her criticism of harmonious ideals based on romantic dualisms as follows: “where we need to move is not ‘back’ to nature, but *elsewhere*, through and within an artifactual social nature” (“Promises” 313; emphasis in

original). In addition, Katherine N. Hayles also argues for the invalidity of self-centered subjectivity and elaborates Haraway's idea: "the posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (3).

To take another example, Morton criticizes the aspect of exclusion in environmentalism and advocates the approach of pluralism toward the environment. His argument casts doubt not only on the dualistic assumption of ecological thought but also on the monistic assumption of an ecosystem where the materials, including humans and non-humans, interact with each other. Morton intends to override both the monistic view of ecology and anthropocentric dichotomies such as natural/unnatural and purity/pollution by submitting the concept "strange stranger" which is "something or someone whose existence we cannot anticipate" (*Ecological Thought* 42). According to him, ecological thought consists "in intimacy with the strange stranger" and needs "to develop an ethical attitude we might call 'coexistentialism'" (*Ecological Thought* 46-7). This tendency in ecological thought reconsiders environmentalism which seeks a harmonious relationship between humans and non-humans and tries to accept others or environmental exclusion, which fosters pluralistic environmentalism.<sup>7</sup> That is, recent ecocritical thought does not necessarily seek harmonious relationships based on the monistic assumption of the ecosystem or on a dichotomic idea based on the romantic view of "pure" nature. Instead, such ecological thought seems to reconsider the arbitrarily constructed concept of the environment and tries to override the mainstream environmentalism which encourages humans to compromise with nature.

Non-harmonious environmental awareness in California literature takes on the challenge of the Anthropocene, which requires us to reconsider the relationship between

humans and non-humans. One of the important points of some literary works of California resisting the romantic environmental discourse is that it internalizes the environment: in other words, their descriptions of the environment, which is considered to be outside of human bodies and minds, suggest that the “external” environment is intimately related to their “internal” bodies and minds. In terms of permeability between “internal” and “external,” Stacy Alaimo insightfully submits the concept of “trans-corporeality” which suggests “the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from ‘the environment’” (2). Alaimo asserts posthuman subjectivity criticizing dichotomic observation of the “outside” environment:

Instead, we can foster the sense of enfolding, in which the “outside” is always already within, inhabiting and transforming what may or may not be still “human” through continual intra-actions. In this dynamic scenario, matter – nature, if you will – is always an agent of change and always already within and without the permeable membrane of the human. This sense of trans-corporeality may best be understood as posthuman in that material agencies reconfigure the very boundaries of the human as such. (154)

Alaimo’s notion of permeability between “internal” and “external” promotes posthuman subjectivity which rejects self-centered individualism. As Rosi Braidotti argues, posthuman subjectivity fosters ecological awareness of interconnection between humans and non-humans which may reconceptualize the relationship between “internal” human bodies and minds and the “external” environment:

An altogether different and powerful source of inspiration for contemporary re-configurations of critical posthumanism is ecology and environmentalism. They rest on an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or “earth” others. This practice of relating to others requires and is enhanced by the rejection of self-centered individualism. It produces a new way of combining self-interests with the well-being of an enlarged community, based on environmental inter-connection. (Braidotti 47-48)

Although the sense of “inter-connection between self and others” leads to constructing “an enlarged community,” this posthuman notion is different from the anthropocentric perspective of harmonious community with nature. As mentioned above, the romantic imagining of nature based on dualism fixes self-centered subjectivity and tends to exclude entities which are harmful to humans. The posthuman subjectivity, however, requires a non-anthropocentric perspective; in other words, a transversal alliance with non-human entities. This notion can be applied to the treatment of the relationship between personal experiences and the environment in literary works of California. The descriptions of bodies and minds in California literature disclose inevitable coexistence with the elements, the “strange stranger” in Morton’s terms, which are not necessarily acceptable for humans. In contrast to the romantic image of California which endorses the achievement of harmonious community, some literary works propose an inevitable human relationship with non-harmonious or destructive elements of the environment.

Deromanticizing California based on the posthuman concept emancipates the land of California from an anthropocentric imposition of human desires on the place. The relationship between personal experiences of California and its environment including

non-human entities in some literary works of California criticize the rigid border between “internal” and “external,” and describes California as a realm which consists of complicated interactions of humans and non-humans. That is, the posthuman notion enlarges the possible ways of describing the land, which deviates from an anthropocentric representation.

### **The Structure of This Dissertation**

While I have mentioned how studies have assumed that the literary works of California often exhibit romantic tendencies, some have struggled with the theme of landscape. That is, they have tried to reconsider one of the themes of California literature based on romantic environmentalism and the myth of the frontier. The purpose of this dissertation, as previously mentioned, is to argue that the description of bodies and minds in some California literature resists the romantic image of California which hopes to achieve a harmonious human relationship with nature. Each chapter, therefore, focuses on the descriptions of personal experiences of California in literary works. What follows summarizes the chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter 1 reveals that the pastoral mode of Sinclair’s *Oil!* paradoxically suggests the impossibility of back-to-nature experience in the oil-based society in the early twentieth century. Although this novel has been regarded as proletarian literature connoting harsh criticism of capitalism, its focus on the oil industry in Southern California should be reevaluated as environmental literature which deals with the ecological interaction between the landscape and the industrial society. Sinclair suggests that the nineteenth-century progressive rhetoric is irreconcilable with pastoral idealism in the early twentieth century. The descriptions of the landscape and crippled-body images

imply that it is hard to grasp the environment in terms of a nature/culture dichotomy and to escape from the industrial society because oil permeates our world.

Chapter 2 deals with Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and scrutinizes the failure of solidarity of disadvantaged characters in the ranch community in order to disclose intolerance of an agricultural capitalist community and a contradiction in the California dream. Paying attention to migrant workers' personal experiences, I would like to argue that the ranch community rejects that otherness which deviates from the norm of the community, and its rejection demonstrates human alienation from the romantic image of California. Although the unrealized pastoral dream which is constructed by the solidarity of the socially disadvantaged seems to give slight hope to the migrant workers, the rigid ideology of the agricultural capitalist system breaks their solidarity. The land of California in the novella cannot be a repository of a golden dream of the migrant workers, and the agricultural capitalist system covers the land of California and exploits the workers.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that Kerouac's melancholic autobiographical novel *Big Sur* overturns the illusion of American wilderness based on the myth of the frontier. In other words, his personal experience of the wilderness shows his alienation from the public desire for the wilderness in the 1960s. This chapter scrutinizes the relationship between his mental breakdown and his representation of nature, and argues that the treatment of the wilderness departs from the general concept of the American wilderness. Kerouac's fear of nature, which comes from his mental breakdown and identity crisis, consequently arouses ecological thought which has the possibility of reinterpreting the concept of the American wilderness. Although he deals with the theme of the American wilderness myth, his ecological thought based on Catholicism and Zen Buddhism suggests the possibility of overturning that myth.

Chapter 4 scrutinizes Brautigan's skeptical attitude toward the romantic view of nature. In his first novel, *A Confederate General from Big Sur*, although Lee Mellon, an eccentric protagonist, advocates seclusion in the wilderness of Big Sur, the place actually provides a harsh reality. This implies the impossibility of a romantic view of the wilderness. Moreover, Mellon's whimsical reiteration of the "Battle of the Wilderness" suggests the wilderness of Big Sur has become a kind of theme park which provides visitors with an illusion of the romantic wilderness experience. His behavior, arising from his obsession with the illusion of his heroic ancestor, discloses that the wilderness cult of the 1960s is based on the illusion of a romantic view of nature. Brautigan, furthermore, writes about the encroachment of civilization on the realm of nature in his second novel *Trout Fishing in America* where "Trout Fishing in America," as a symbol of the pastoral "good-old-days," appears in various forms. One example is the personification of "Trout Fishing in America" as the disabled-middle-aged man "Trout Fishing in America Shorty." Paying attention to the severed-body image of personified "Trout Fishing in America Shorty," the latter part of this chapter demonstrates the amputated body of the symbol of the traditional pastoral indicates the impossibility of the Hemingway-like pastoral and its showpiece quality. That is, Brautigan's treatment of the obsessed mind, of the metaphorical body image and of the realm of nature deconstructs the romantic idea of nature.

Chapter 5 elucidates how the devastated environment in Kadohata's *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* disturbs the illusion of the harmonious relationship between humans and nature based on a romantic view of nature. The protagonist's survival in desolate Los Angeles has the possibility of overriding the anthropocentric view of environmental exclusion such as waste and pollution. Kadohata's environmental awareness can be seen

in the treatment of skin, which suggests a framework of acceptance. The sense of acceptance of external agency consequently demonstrates her inclusive ecological awareness which embraces environmental exclusion and deviates from the mainstream environmentalism based on a romantic view of nature.

Although these works draw upon the framework of an outsider's romantic view of the landscape of California and two modes of environmentalism, their treatments of bodies and minds reveal that the environment of California is resistant to the romantic dream. Literary works of California which are aware of the trans-corporeal quality in the relationship between humans and the environment suggest not only that bodies and minds are symptoms of environmental degradation but also that desolation of bodies and minds becomes an opportunity to reconsider the romantic discourse of harmony.

## Chapter 1

### **An Environment Mediated by Petroleum in Upton Sinclair's *Oil!***

Uncontaminated nature cannot be separated from industrial society: Upton Sinclair's *Oil!* (1927) reveals this conception of the environment. Although Sinclair depicts pastoral conflict between a pristine countryside and an industrial society, he does not regard the earth's inherent attributes and products as sacred or opposed to humans or human inventions. Instead, his description of Southern California suggests an interaction between the rural landscape and the industrial society. This chapter will scrutinize Sinclair's exposition of a relationship between humans and nature. Sinclair's description of severed-body images and the landscape proposes that it is impossible to escape into a pastoral illusion of harmony between humans and nature in California.

Previous studies on *Oil!* have revealed that the novel foregrounds the conflict between capital and labor. The general interpretation of Sinclair's description of Southern California has followed Wilson's observation that California writers have been dealing with the "theme of the class war" (62). For example, Robert Cantwell elucidates Sinclair's depiction of political activities of some socialist characters based on Sinclair's real socialist friends, arguing that Sinclair is one of the most important American novelists who sees "in the struggle between capital and labor the driving force of modern society" (41). Moreover, Frederick J. Hoffman describes Sinclair as one of those who expressed progressive opinions during the 1920s (378), and Stephen Matterson classifies Sinclair's works as "proletarian literature" (177). To sum up, *Oil!* has been read as a leftist novel focusing on the ideology of socialism.

*Oil!*, however, does not simply criticize capitalism and the success of businessmen, nor does it advocate socialism; it depicts a complicated conflict between political and economic ideals. Sinclair does not portray capitalism as an unrelenting evil that should be defeated by a socialist revolution. Instead, this novel portrays the seeking of an alternative ideal society that does not assign primary importance to the accumulation of material wealth. The oil man J. Arnold Ross, called “Dad” in the novel, is a successful businessman in a capitalist society. He is not censured outright by Paul Watkins, a revolutionary socialist. As Michael Millgate points out, even the communists “respect businessmen of Ross’s kind: they have power and do not hesitate to use it; they play the game for all they are worth. Paul Watkins, fighting to take away the power of oil-men, does not in the least blame them for fighting to hold on to it” (68-9). Furthermore, the novel’s protagonist, Bunny, J. Arnold Ross’s son, is troubled by conflicting emotions: he is torn between his Dad’s capitalist success and his own socialist ideals. Although he seeks a nonviolent way to achieve socialist ideals, he consequently holds his judgment on the issue of political conflict.

Although social and political conflict is a prominent feature of this novel, the representation of petroleum should not be ignored, because the oil industry and the culture relying on the use of oil in California seem to represent the source of the conflict. This clash is loosely based on the Teapot Dome scandal of the 1920s.<sup>1</sup> Lauren Coodley insightfully observes that Sinclair tells us “about oil, and how it created the freeways that destroyed the railroads, and the subdivisions that destroyed the orchards” (x). Although certain scholars such as Peter Hitchcock and Jenny Kerber discuss the difficulty of representing oil in literary works, because oil’s saturation makes us blind to the material itself,<sup>2</sup> Sinclair tries to write about oil changing the environment of Southern California

by focusing on the class conflict resulting from the thriving oil industry. Thus, *Oil!* exposes the early-twentieth century situation of the Southern California society on the basis of oil extraction and discloses the relationship between social conflicts and modern society, which was, in actual terms, an oil-based society.

Sinclair's notion of the conflict between the development of the natural landscape and the oil industry seems to trace the traditions of American pastoral. Pastoral literature often depicts the rural landscape as a refuge from the urban. Terry Gifford defines the term "pastoral" as "any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban" (2). Glen A. Love is also aware of the binary opposition between the natural world and human activities in pastoral thought: "the comfortably mythopoeic green world of pastoral is beset by profound threats of pollution, despoliation, and diminishment" (66). Moreover, Buell observes that this contrast has played a significant role in American literary history: "American literature has been thought of as markedly 'pastoral' in the loose sense of being preoccupied with nature and rurality as setting, theme, and value in contradiction from society and the urban" (1).

With respect to this contrast in pastoralism, Marx notes the inherent complexity of the concept of American pastoral. American writers who deal with the concept of the pastoral tend to be aware of intruding machinery symbolizing "the progress of the arts and sciences" (Marx 225). Therefore, the representation of the American natural landscape is inseparable from the representation of technology. Marx indicates that the complexity of American pastoralism is rooted in the fact that it relies on the illusion that the progress of the technology that conquers the wilderness will also realize the objective of "a society of the middle landscape, a rural nation exhibiting a happy balance of art and nature" (226). This illusion enables "the nation to continue defining its purpose as the

pursuit of rural happiness while devoting itself to productivity, wealth, and power” (Marx 226). Thus, according to Marx, the inherent contradiction within the idea of American pastoralism emanates from the notion that the advance of technology leads to the achievement of the ideal of the pastoral nation.

This rhetoric of technology’s progress as an aspect of the pursuit of rural happiness, however, does not work in the early twentieth century. In *Oil!*, the protagonist’s romantic view of nature tends to display the American pastoral mode and exhibits complex interactions between the rural landscape and technological development in forms such as the drilling of the derrick. However, his attitude suggests skepticism about the exploitation and the abuse of natural resources. Hence, Sinclair’s view seems to suggest that the oil industry is never going to be the means of achieving the pastoral ideal.

Although the oil business symbolized material success in the 1920s, Sinclair accords his readers an insight into the negative aspect of such a materialistic dream. The 1920s witnessed the ubiquitous use of automobiles, and the nation’s demand for gasoline rose exponentially. Accordingly, as Harte asserts, “more and more refineries came into being, many of them located in the San Francisco Bay area, as even more discoveries of rich fields were made in the 1920s” (360). Considering this situation, it is understandable that the oil boom in Los Angeles also embodies the desire for material success. Indeed, as Hicks notes, “some say California is the final heaven for the ancestor of all such legends [legend of mineral riches, legend of golden opportunities, legend of open space and oranges, and land of promise], the great American Dream” (“General Introduction” 6). Sinclair, however, casts a doubtful shadow on such dreams and depicts the negative aspects and contradictions of the flourishing oil industry.

While Stephanie LeMenager claims that *Oil!* is “written as a warning against global

petromodernity” (70), Sinclair shows an ambivalent attitude to the oil industry and the complex condition of a flourishing oil-based society. The changes in the protagonist’s view of nature especially exhibit Sinclair’s awareness of the alteration of the landscape of California, a detail that will be described later. At the beginning, Bunny, the protagonist, tends to applaud human development that conquers nature and lauds the pioneers of Southern California who drill for oil. However, he gradually comes to romanticize nature and abhor its exploitation by material capitalist desires. He begins to doubt his blind longing for development when he witnesses the oil industry’s exploitation of the beautiful countryside. His wavering stance toward the oil industry suggests his difficulty in evaluating whether the flourishing oil industry is right.

Although Hicks’s phrase, California is “the final heaven,” implies the potential to put the pastoral in order through technological development, Sinclair suggests that the nineteenth century progressive rhetoric noted by Marx is irreconcilable with pastoral idealism in the early twentieth century. In the following, I will focus on Bunny’s perception of the landscape through the use of a car. While the movement of the car that relies on petroleum enables him to realize an ecological perspective, his experience of the landscape implies that his view of Southern California is distant. The epistemological detachment between the actual landscape and his viewing of scenery indicates that the experience of the landscape is highly related to the use of oil. In other words, the countryside depicted in the novel implies the saturation of petroleum.

I will also pay attention to the treatment of severed and crippled bodies connected to the oil industry. The emphasis placed on these bodies suggests not only the saturation of oil but also the impossibility of escaping from the influence of oil and into uncontaminated nature. Sinclair observes that the violent force of the oil industry cannot

achieve pastoral idealism. The descriptions of bodies signify the difficulties of grasping the environment through a nature/culture dichotomy and demonstrate the impossibility of escaping industrial society because oil permeates our world. Bunny's personal experiences of Southern California and the indications of crippled human bodies suggest the limitations of the conception of a harmonious pastoral based on development of oil-based technology.

### **Spectator of the Landscape**

Witnessing a part of the natural environment of Southern California places Bunny in the position of a spectator. The use of the car suggests that Bunny's perception of the countryside depends highly on his drive-by viewing. In the opening chapter, Bunny sees some wild animals, including a jackrabbit, a butcher-bird, and a roadrunner, through the car window. It grants him a changing view of the ecological panorama before him. This experience, however, suggests that Bunny can merely witness the landscape that passes in front of his eyes. The drive-by viewing, which relies on the use of petroleum, seems to change the human perception of the surroundings.

It is hardly surprising that Sinclair devotes some pages to narrating the drive-by viewing of the landscape in light of the historical background of automobile travel in the early twentieth century. According to Gabrielle R. Barnett, "automobile travel allowed early-twentieth-century tourists to enjoy aspects of premodern experience that had been lost to train travel" (32). She observes the relationship between automobile tourism and the preservation of the Redwoods in northern California. In 1919, Save-the-Redwoods League activists tried to promote "scenic tourism and redwood preservation" and to protect "road side forests first," which means they tended to protect the landscape that

could be seen from the road (Barnett 33). Moreover, a landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, observed in his report of the state park problem in 1929 that “thousands of square miles of land in California, privately owned but threaded by public roads, present *beautiful landscapes which are possessed in this sense by the riders on the roads*” (28; emphasis added). It is obvious that in his mind, the preservation of the landscape and the preservation of the scenery from the road are synonymous. The drive-by viewing was an important phenomenon in the early twentieth century, both for the tourism industry and nature preservationists. The popularization of the car changed human awareness of physical surroundings. The landscape came to be regarded as an exhibition at a certain distance from its spectator.

In the novel, the drive-by viewing indirectly mediated by petroleum provides a perspective on the process of regional transformation. Although, as Barnett elucidates, auto-tourism in the early twentieth century mainly focused on raw natural phenomena such as the Redwoods, Bunny’s perspective displays the complexity of the entire ecology of Southern California, including its human activities and its non-human world.

Bunny initially observes the transformation of the landscape as the consequence of the human conquest of nature. Bunny and Dad drive to Southern California to sign a contract with ranchers who own a piece of land with an oil deposit. As they speed through the Guadalupe Grade to California, Bunny sees the surroundings and applauds the technology that covers the natural landscape. The opening sentence, “the road ran, smooth and flawless, precisely fourteen feet wide, the edges trimmed as if by shears, a ribbon of grey concrete, rolled out over the valley by a giant hand” (*Oil!* 1), shows that the road system cuts through and tames the natural landscape. Moreover, Bunny feels that the “magic ribbon of concrete laid out for you, winding here and there, feeling its way upward

with hardly a variation of grade, taking off the shoulder of a mountain, cutting straight through the apex of another, diving into the black belly of a third” is “glorious” (*Oil!* 5). The opening part portrays Bunny’s exaltation at development. Wild animals such as birds and ground squirrels give way to human technology in the form of a noisy, honking car. Moreover, the road described as the “magic ribbon of concrete” clears mountains and extends westward. Sinclair dares to depict the ecstasy of the development of technology cutting through nature via Bunny’s admiration for the magic of human technology. Furthermore, when Bunny observes the method by which the derrick is excavated, he thinks, “what could be more fun to watch than a job like this? To know what was going on under the ground; to see the ingenuity by which men overcome Nature’s obstacles. . .” (*Oil!* 76-77). Here, he regards nature as the supplier of “obstacles” that should be “overcome” by human power.

On the other hand, he witnesses the disorderly development of the cityscape while driving his car. The drive-by viewing of the city suggests chaotic human development that disregards the appropriate arrangement of the urban environment:

Here were trolley tracks and railroads, and subdivisions with no “restrictions” – that is, you might build any kind of house you pleased, and rent it to people of any race or color; which meant an ugly slum, spreading like a great sore, with shanties of tin and tar-paper and unpainted boards. . . . They [Dad and Bunny] skirted the city, avoiding the traffic crowds in its center, and presently came a sign: “Beach City Boulevard.” It was a wide asphalt road, with thousands of speeding cars, and more subdivisions and suburban home-sites, with endless ingenious advertisements designed to catch the fancy of the motorist, and cause him to put

on brakes. (*Oil!* 21)

Sinclair depicts rapidly developing subdivisions expanded by the early-twentieth century real-estate boom in Southern California.<sup>3</sup> The chaotic development of the city induces the image of “an ugly slum” and implies the inferiority of the urban environment. Although overpopulation may have caused the slum to appear, the city continues to appeal to drivers to stop within its bounds. Roadside advertisements stimulate the desires of drivers to attract them. Thus, the development of the city is inseparable from the growth of the road system. The developing city seizes the drivers and sprawls outwards in an unlimited expanse. Sinclair pays attention to the affirmation of the development and to the possibility of the side effects, i.e., the chaotic cityscape makes the urban environment unpleasant.

Although Bunny initially applauds human development and the conquest of nature, he shows a skeptical view toward the growth of the city that also relies on the flourishing oil industry. In a remarkable instance that shows the beginning of Bunny’s devotion to the natural world, Sinclair highlights Bunny’s sympathy for seals at a beach in Los Angeles. When Bunny comes to the beach on a holiday, he looks at the seals on the shore:

They [seals] were strangely human, a circle of foreign children, watching some visitor who does not know their language and may or may not be dangerous. . . . Whatever he [Bunny] wanted, they would yield to him, the superior being, and content themselves with the places he had left. . . . The world was so beautiful, and at the same time strange, and interesting to be alive in! What must it be like to be a seal? What did they think concerning this arrogant being who

commandeered their resting place? (*Oil!* 337)

The situation seems to be a refrain from the scene in which Bunny sees the surroundings and nature being cut through by human development on Guadalupe Grade. Seals, here, yield ground to Bunny just as the birds and ground squirrels gave way to Dad's car. The theme of wild animals giving way to humans who tame the wilderness resonates here. Although the human as "the superior being" subjugates the surroundings, Bunny becomes conscious of himself as an "arrogant being." In contrast to his former self who blindly admired the human conquest of nature, he now empathizes with the seals. He stands on the side of animals and tries to objectively reconsider human development.

Bunny's attitude toward the landscape gradually changes from admiration to skepticism toward development through his experience of watching Dad's ways of exploiting a ranch. Dad buys and drills on a ranch called Paradise, owned by the Watkins family. The piece of land successfully produces oil. Sinclair describes the transformation of Paradise: "this ranch [Paradise] had been a place where Dad could come to rest and shoot quail; but now that they had struck oil, it was the last place in the world where he [Bunny] could rest" (*Oil!* 167). Dad and Bunny's resting area becomes their workplace.

Along with his skepticism toward development, Bunny's romantic view of nature is emphasized when he revisits Paradise. Bunny has become an adolescent, and his feelings about his socialist ideals and his capitalist businessman Dad become ambivalent. Nature functions as an entity that arouses a skeptical view of the enormous human power in Bunny, who now seeks an alternative to capitalism:

And once you were out of sight of the derricks, and out of smell of the refinery, it

was the same beautiful country, with the same clear sky and golden sunsets, and you could get the poisons of bootleg liquor out of your blood, and the embarrassing memories out of your soul. Tramping these rocky hills, drawing this magical air into your lungs, it was impossible to think that men would not some day learn to be happy! (*Oil!* 379)

Bunny views beautiful rural scenery as a phenomenon that is distant from the derricks and the refinery, and feels free from his mundane life filled with “bootleg liquor” enjoyed by upper class revelers. For Bunny, happiness does not mean material success or belonging to upper class society. In contrast to the former Bunny who was fascinated by human development, the “magical air” of the rural regions distant from the oil industry enralls him. Bunny’s romanticism with regard to nature is ultimately depicted in the scene where he and his fiancée, Rachel, drive to the planned construction site for the labor school that they plan to operate after Dad’s death. When he sees the valley and the quail, “Bunny’s heart was an ache of loneliness – because quail meant Dad, and those beautiful hills of Paradise, and happiness he had dreamed in vain” (*Oil!* 519). Here, the quail reminds him of “those hills of Paradise” juxtaposed with the term “happiness.” Bunny’s idealism, implied in his romantic enjoyment of nature’s pristine beauty, is far from Dad’s capitalist desires. His romantic view of nature is exploited by the materialist dream of capitalism and strengthens his resolve to discover an alternative ideal.

Bunny’s acquisition of the romantic view of the ideal rural landscape, however, depends on his use of petroleum, as represented by the car. One of the most remarkable scenes that reveals Bunny’s drive-by viewing of the rural landscape is the vistas he observes on his way to Vernon Roscoe’s residence called the “Monastery.” As he passes

by, he sees the coast lined with fishermen's shacks:

You drove up behind a chain of mountains that lined the coast: another of those wonderful roads, a magic ribbon of concrete, laid out by a giant's hand. The engine purred softly and you raced ahead of the wind, up long slopes and down long slopes, and winding through mazes of hills; there were steep grades and vistas of tumbled mountains, and broad sweeps of valley, and stretches of shore with fishermen's huts, and boats, and nets drying in the sun; then more hills and mountain grades. . . . (*Oil!* 321)

Bunny longs for the lifestyle of hobos and poor laborers – he wants to “go off with a bunch of youngsters in a rattle-trap old Ford” and to “get a job picking up fruit” to obtain “ten or twelve dollars every week” (*Oil!* 318) For him, the rural fishermen's workplace suggests the ideal pastoral landscape. The view from the car window indicates that the landscape of Southern California is a mix of natural landscape, oil refineries, the road system, and the pastoral based on primary industry. Although Bunny often regards the rural landscape as opposing the flourishing capitalist rhetoric that exploits natural resources to achieve material wealth, his own romantic view of the rural landscape is inseparable from the development of the oil-based society. In other words, his movement via car enables him to see varied aspects of the landscape, but his experience of the vistas depends on his use of petroleum.

The saturation of oil changes the way people perceive the environment. The drive-by viewing makes the countryside an object that is viewed from a certain distance. The power of the car fueled by petroleum transforms not only the actual natural landscape but

also the human perception of the vistas. This novel treats the car as a phenomenon that holds enormous power and can remove humans to the position of spectators rather than participants in the landscape.

### **Crippled Bodies**

The land of Southern California offers diverse vistas that include the road system, flourishing cities, rural areas, and the natural world. The vastness of Bunny's experience suggests that the use of the car and the consequent dependence on petroleum may extend the sphere of the human experience of the landscape. Marshall McLuhan regards this characteristic of the automobile as "an extension of man that turns the rider into a superman" (241). In other words, when human bodies are mediated by the automobile, they can extend their physical abilities to see many places in a short time.

*Oil!*, however, exhibits not only the extended human body but also displays images of crippled bodies. According to William A. Bloodworth, *Oil!* exhibits violence as a major aspect including "oilfield fires, labor warfare, and the mobbing of a radical meeting where Paul Watkins is murdered" (109). Although his indication is understandable, this novel should be scrutinized in terms of its treatment of crippled bodies that emerge because of the violent force of the oil industry. While Bunny dreams of a peaceful natural landscape that is the opposite of the contaminated cityscape based on the oil industry, the deformity of bodies suggests that Bunny's romantic view of nature is an illusion. In the opening chapter, Bunny admires surroundings that have been overcome by human agency and disguise the natural landscape. On the other hand, he observes a victim of human power through the car window: "a mangled corpse – a ground squirrel had tried to cross, and a car had mashed it flat" (*Oil!* 15). The insertion of a wild animal's dead body seemingly

implies the negative aspect of human development. Thus, Sinclair simultaneously pays attention to marginal entities subjugated by human supremacy. The mangled corpse connotes the possibility that the spreading oil-based society can spearhead the mangling of living things.

The violent power of the oil-based society that indirectly severs bodies extends over both wild animals and human bodies. One of the typical images of the mangled body is the accident suffered by Joe Gundha, a derrick worker who falls into an oil well. Although Bunny does not see the “torn body” directly, he envisions the method of recovering the dead: “in his mind he saw the men screwing the ‘grab’ onto the drill-stem – a tool which was built to go over obstacles that fell into the hole, and to catch hold of them with sharp hooks” (*Oil!* 153). Joe’s accident makes Bunny realize the damage done to the dead body by the screwing grab. Once a worker is dead in the hole, he is treated as an obstacle to the ongoing work. The accident at the oil field shows Bunny that the workers who try to pick Joe up would ignore the dignity of the dead to remove the “obstacle” from their working place so that they can recommence the drilling as soon as possible. Moreover, Bunny thinks that “they might get Joe Gundha by the legs and they might get him by the face – ugh, the less you thought about a thing like that, the better for your enjoyment of the oil-game” (*Oil!* 153). Thus, if he wants to continue to enjoy oil hunting, he must overlook the victims of the oil industry. Although he does not want to think about Joe’s mangled corpse, he unwillingly connects the image of the severed body with the oil industry.

Sinclair also connects Joe’s dead body with the bursting and scattered bodies of soldiers at the European front of World War I. Before the description of Joe’s accident, Sinclair draws his readers’ attention to the relationship between the oil industry in the U.S.

and World War I through his treatment of severed bodies: millions of men in Europe rushed “to have their bodies blown to pieces and their lifeblood poured out upon the ground. The newspapers told about battles that lasted for months, and the price of petroleum products continued to pile up fortunes for J. Arnold Ross” (*Oil!* 130). This description discloses that Dad’s oil industry has influenced warfare across the Atlantic. The power of the oil industry indirectly smashes the bodies of soldiers even as Dad successfully accumulates oil money. This representation is probably Sinclair’s strategic way of offering his readers a vivid impression of the association between Joe’s dead body and the torn bodies of soldiers. A few weeks after Joe’s cruel accident, Bunny notes that the violent force of the oil industry that mangled Joe’s body is also indirectly responsible for mutilating millions of bodies in Europe:

Your Thanksgiving dinner was spoiled, because one poor laborer had slid down into a well which you happened to own: but dozens and perhaps hundreds of men had been hurt in other wells all over the country, and that didn’t trouble you a bit. For that matter, think of all the men who were dying over there in Europe! All the way from Flanders to Switzerland the armies were hiding in trenches, bombarding each other day and night, and thousands were being mangled just as horribly as by a grab in the bottom of a well; but you hadn’t intended to let that spoil your Thanksgiving dinner, not a bit! (*Oil!* 155)

The narrator obviously juxtaposes Joe’s dead body at the bottom of the well with the mangled bodies of soldiers in European trenches. Although a purely local perspective makes it difficult for people to recognize the relationship between the oil industry in

Southern California and World War I, readers come to understand the violent vigor of the oil industry which permeates the world when Sinclair imaginatively exemplifies the connection between a local accident and global warfare. The vision of severed bodies implies the complex of the oil industry and warfare.

The trans-Atlantic imagination of severed bodies related to the oil industry appears not only in the scene of European warfare but also in the political violence committed against a young Communist comrade who is tortured by the White Army and escapes from a Romanian prison. When Bunny goes to Vienna, he sees “a creature that had once been a young man, but now was little more than skeleton covered with a skin of greenish-yellow” (*Oil!* 481). Although the man is still alive, he has “only one eye and one ear, and it could not speak because its tongue had been pulled out or cut off, and most of its front teeth had been extracted, and its cheeks were pitted with holes made by cigarettes burned into it” (*Oil!* 481). Meeting this man who has been cruelly tortured, Bunny realizes “how the flesh had been *ripped and torn by lashes* this way and that, like cross-hatching in a pen and ink drawing” (*Oil!* 481; emphasis added). The man’s body is torn by the White Army, which is opposed to the Bolshevik revolution. Although his severed body arises from the domestic conflict between political stances that appear to be unrelated to the U.S. oil industry, Sinclair dares to mention the cooperation between the U.S. oil industry and the “White Terror” squad that supports the republican form of government. The Romanian government is opposed to the Bolshevik revolution and it controls the natural resources of the country. It also leases one of the biggest Romanian oil fields to “an American syndicate” in which Bunny’s father is involved (*Oil!* 481). Bunny notes the relationship between Dad’s business and the White Terror. While there is no direct description of the oil industry’s actions in cracking down on the Bolshevik revolution, the oil industry in

the U.S. is certainly alleged to be involved in the complexity of the political conflict in Europe. Sinclair depicts the suppression of socialists and communists in America, and it is no wonder that the oil industry, which embodies the capitalist philosophy, supports a government hostile to the Reds.

The saturation of oil wields enormous power both over those who are not directly related to the oil business and over the direct owners of the business such as Dad. He explains that his business is not free from the federation called the “open shop crowd” (*Oil!* 176). He must obey the regulations of the federation in order to run his business. He has to follow the federation’s strikebreaking policy even if he sympathizes with laborers who attempt to strike if he wants his work to continue to progress. The influence of the open shop crowd encompasses the entirety of the industrial world: this federation includes not just “the Petroleum Employers’ Federation, but the Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the Bankers’ Club” (*Oil!* 176). Therefore, Dad’s business must participate according to the federation’s policies if he desires to maintain his property. Dad definitely understands that the federation has the discipline that emanates from the security of wealth and hence convinces Bunny that “there was no safety for you, unless you stood with the group that had power” (*Oil!* 176). Bunny, however, sees the federation as “one elaborate system” and observes that he and his father are “part of that system, and must help to maintain it in spite of themselves” (*Oil!* 180): that is, the system of the industry captures and binds them. Bunny realizes that they have to work within the system. Therefore, they do not have any freedom with respect to their own business. In this sense, although they belong to the capitalist class, they are alienated within the capitalist system: in Bunny’s words, “we don’t own our own business! we don’t even own our souls” (*Oil!* 176).

Although Dad's body is not directly severed by the oil industry, it has become weak due to aging and because of the hard work the oil industry demands. For Bunny, Dad is "like an old horse in a treadmill" as he engages in his business (*Oil!* 292). Therefore, Bunny takes Dad out of the business and brings him to a refuge where he can briefly be free from the toil and the politics of the industry. Although Bunny believes nature should be a refuge, it does not work well for Dad: "he [Bunny] would take Dad fishing, and they would pretend they were just as happy as of old in the bosom of their mother Nature – though the sad truth was that *Dad was too heavy and too stiff in the joints to get much fun out of scrambling over the rocks*" (*Oil!* 293; emphasis added). Depicting Dad's weak body, Sinclair implies that leisure in the lap of nature, which according to Bunny should be his refuge from the conflicts of the industrial world, is not comfortable for Dad because of his health problems.

The theme of the deformity of the body awakens the negative aspect of the oil-based society. The novel exhibits the cognition that human bodies are directly or indirectly scarred by the oil industry. Although Bunny innocently hopes to escape into nature, it is impossible for him to escape from the influence of the pervasive oil industry. Dad's bodily difficulties symbolically suggest that Bunny's naïve view of the back-to-nature experience is an illusion.

Moreover, the final paragraph of this novel especially reveals the relationship between bodies deformed by the oil industry and the image of the pastoral. In Paradise, Bunny sees three grave posts under which the bodies of Joe, Paul Watkins, and Paul's sister Ruth are buried and imagines the fantastic vision of a pastoral landscape that has no "unlovely derricks:"

There will be other girls with bare brown legs running over those hills, and they may grow up to be happier women, if men can find some way to chain the black and cruel demon which killed Ruth Watkins and her brother – yes, and Dad also: an evil Power which roams the earth, crippling the bodies of men and women, luring the nations to destruction by visions of unearned wealth, and the opportunity to enslave and exploit labor. (*Oil!* 548)

Sinclair describes oil as the “black and cruel demon” and as “evil Power.” He also clearly asserts that oil deforms human bodies. He depicts the heavenly pastoral image as a contrast to such a demonic image of oil. He juxtaposes fiendish oil against pastoral illusion to remind readers of his uneasiness with the destruction of nature. This representation at the same time shows that it is impossible to enjoy the blessings of nature in an oil-based society unless people can renounce the blind worship of capitalist success, a philosophy that advocates material wealth based on the extraction of petroleum.

Sinclair depicts the oil industry in California influencing human bodies globally. In an oil-based society, human bodies are unconsciously encroached upon by petroleum. The crippled bodies in the novel highlight the cruelty and the uncontrollability of the oil industry. In other words, there is no refuge where people can flee from the influence of oil that permeates the early-twentieth-century society. These descriptions are finally connected to the impossibility of Dad entering and taking pleasure from nature. Consequently, it is revealed that Bunny’s romantic view of nature is illusory and that his eagerness for the harmonious pastoral cannot be achieved by human bodies that are saturated by petroleum in an oil-based society.

### **The Environment Mediated by Oil**

*Oil!* discloses the dissemination of oil through human existence. The use of the automobile is totally dependent on petroleum. Moreover, the flourishing oil industry in the U.S. has become an enormous authority that can exercise power over politics, economy, and global issues such as a global war and an international socialist movement. Depicting a protagonist who is torn between the rhetoric of capitalist success and the idealism of socialism, Sinclair seemingly holds his judgment on the political concept in suspense. Instead, he suggests an attitude that promotes a deeper contemplation of the relationship between humans and non-human entities such as oil, the landscape, and technology.

Although the movement made possible by the automobile suggests a human physical ability to encounter various aspects of the larger environment in a short time, the oil culture severs and disfigures human bodies. Sinclair emphasizes the violent power of the oil industry and consequently depicts the difficulty for the crippled human body to experience actual and raw nature. The natural world cannot function as a refuge from industrial society for a body saturated by oil.

The description of the landscape and crippled bodies illustrates the enormous power of the oil industry and discloses why the complex pastoral idea that seeks a rural nation through development is impossible in the early twentieth century. This novel elucidates the fact that the modern experience of pastoral countryside vistas is itself mediated by petroleum. Thus, the pursuit of a harmonious pastoral landscape through the progress of technology is an illusion that cannot be realized. Sinclair's *Oil!* casts doubt on the romantic image that California provides the dwellers with vast natural resources to enact a harmonious middle landscape.

## Chapter 2

### **The Failure of Solidarity: Intolerant Agricultural Capitalism in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men***

According to Jackson J. Benson, Steinbeck “was talking about *man living in harmony with nature*, condemning a false sense of progress, advocating love and acceptance, condemning the nearly inevitable use of violence, and preaching ecology” (196; emphasis added). *Of Mice and Men* (1937), however, discloses the limitation of harmony. Although Steinbeck submits a notion of ecology which considers living in relation to each other, his treatment of disability in the novella suggests an impasse in possible solidarity for those who are suppressed by agricultural capitalist ideology. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Sinclair's *Oil!* portrays deformity of bodies as victims of the oil-based society, and the image of severed bodies implies failure to find a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* also explores the theme of severance in that agricultural capitalism denies the possibility of human solidarity in resisting the norms of the community based on able-bodied men's ideology.

This chapter scrutinizes the failure of solidarity among disadvantaged characters in the ranch community in order to disclose intolerance of agricultural capitalist community and a contradiction in the California dream. Focusing on the migrant workers' personal experiences in the rural landscape and disabilities of some characters, I would like to suggest that the ranch community rejects the otherness which deviates from the norm of the community and its rejection demonstrates human alienation from the romantic image of California. As John L. Marsden points out, in *Of Mice and Men*, “the dream of

independence and self-sufficiency apparently upheld by the vast spaces of the western frontier” relies on a “capital-based economy,” and yet the dream of independence “directly conflicts with capitalist practices, as George, Lennie and the others discover” (291-92).<sup>1</sup> In the novella, George and Lennie’s dream of a little land needs an open space which they could obtain. This implies that migrant workers’ desire to acquire their own land is captured by capitalism though George and Lennie do not seem to realize their dream of a homestead is based on capitalist ideology. As I argue below, the failure of their dream paradoxically suggests intolerance in capitalist ideology: that is, although the desire to acquire available land is based on capital-based economy, George and Lennie’s dream is eventually severed by the norm of the capital-based ranch community.

Although previous research on *Of Mice and Men* tends to discuss whether this novella is a tragedy or not, one of its central themes seems to be human commitment to the land. *Of Mice and Men* invokes an illusion of a lost Eden from which fallen men are obliged to be expelled (Lisca, *John Steinbeck* 82). Wyatt asserts that “displacement is the theme, and what distinguishes this fantasy of male retreat from its counterparts is George’s half-conscious awareness of the fictionality of the hope for home” (130); Wyatt subsequently declares that “California is the garden lost” for Steinbeck (132).

Previous arguments about the individual relationship with the land has prepared a platform of ecocritical approaches to Steinbeck’s works. The ecocritical perspective often regards Steinbeck’s environmental awareness as a herald of the concept of ecology which presumes the interaction of humans and non-humans. Since the late 1990s, ecocritical approaches have been promoted in Steinbeck studies. For example, Richard E. Hart, who assumes Steinbeck’s early fiction is “ensconced within the tradition of naturalism,” pays attention to the paradox within the text between the theory of literary naturalism that

human fates are determined by the environment and its counter theory that humans have free will. Invoking an ecological point of view, he concludes that “man is not just a cultural or political or economic animal but fundamentally a species in nature, a unique and hopeful part of the whole and never detached from it” (52). Moreover, Michael T. Gibbons observes two types of naturalism: the first is “Romantic naturalism,” which “presumes that human beings are more at home in the natural world than in cities,” and the other is a “mechanical type of naturalism” in which “the lives and behavior of human beings are shaped, both psychologically and biologically, by laws of nature” (152). According to Gibbons, Steinbeck formally belongs to the latter. However, he argues that “Steinbeck refuses to treat nature as irresistible or human beings as so many billiard balls that move only because of external forces” (152). Although Steinbeck’s fiction seems to be based on environmental determinism, it also suggests the notion of ecological interaction between humans and non-humans.<sup>2</sup>

In *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck foregrounds a harmonious relationship between humans and nature when he depicts George and Lennie’s dream of a little land. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, American pastoralism seeks a harmonious terrain of rurality which is opposed to the urban. Steinbeck’s description of the landscape of Soledad basically follows the ideology of pastoralism. The opening scene depicts both the natural scenery along the Salinas River which “runs deep and green” (*MM* 3)<sup>3</sup> with signs of animals and a human trace in the woods: “in front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it” (*MM* 3-4). This suggests that some migrant workers have stayed and passed through the place. In this scene, the relationship between humans and nature is humble. In contrast to the beginning of the second chapter which focuses closely on the artificiality

of the farmhouse, the opening chapter of this novella portrays a harmonious and serene world.

George and Lennie's unrealized dream also depicts a harmonious relationship between humans and non-humans:

“O. K. Someday – we’re gonna get the jack together and we’re gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an’ a cow and some pigs. . . . we’ll have a big vegetable patch and a rabbit hutch and chickens. And when it rains in the winter, we’ll just say the hell with goin’ to work, and we’ll build up a fire in the stove and set around it an’ listen to the rain comin’ down on the roof. . . .” (*MM* 16)

In the opening chapter, George tells the story of his agrarian dream to Lennie, and Lennie recites a passage “*an’ live off the fatta the lan’*” (*MM* 16; emphasis in original). This story, following American pastoralism, suggests that they imagine the ideal georgic life on their own small plot of land.

Moreover, George’s story subsequently portrays the ecological diversity of the envisioned land:

“An’ we could have a few pigs. . . . An’ when the salmon run up river we could catch a hundred of ’em an’ salt ’em down or smoke ’em. . . . When the fruit come in we could can it – and tomatoes, they’re easy to can. . . . all kin’s a vegetables in the garden, and if we want a little whisky we can sell a few eggs or something, or some milk. We’d jus’ live there. We ‘d belong there.” (*MM* 57-8)

Yuji Kami regards the little land as a utopia where humans and non-humans live together (111); Steinbeck depicts George and Lennie's dream as a pastoral life on the little plot in opposition to the reality that they are exploited as cheap labor on the ranch.

It is the representation of the ranch in the novella that reminds readers of confinement of migrant workers. The opening paragraph of the second chapter emphasizes the artificiality of the bunkhouse: "the bunk house was a long, rectangular building. Inside, the walls were whitewashed and the floor unpainted. In three walls there were small, square windows, and in the fourth, a solid door with a wooden latch" (*MM* 19). In contrast to the openness of the first chapter, the description of the ranch evokes hard and rigid images. The characteristic of confinement in the bunkhouse implies the failure of George and Lennie's dream.

The failure of their dream evokes the impossibility of achieving their ideal and reenacting the Edenic myth. As I will show, Steinbeck's treatment of disability in the novella discloses the structure of exclusion lying beneath the norm of agricultural capitalist community. According to Michael Davidson, some writers in the early twentieth century, such as William Faulkner, William Carlos Williams, Joseph Conrad and Steinbeck, tend to regard mental disability as a risk to social order:

Whereas Romantic poets could celebrate the simple fool or mad prophet, modernist writers tended to treat mental disability as pathological counterpart to cultural decay. . . . John Steinbeck's indictment of Depression-era economic powerlessness is figured in [*Of*] *Mice and Men* (1937) by his mentally disabled character, Lennie Small, whose inadvertent violence justifies euthanasia by his fellow migrant worker, George. In each case, mental disability marks biological

degeneration and social disorder that the narrative seeks to contain and transform.

(77)

Davidson observes that the treatment of mental disability in literary works mirrors the atmosphere of social and economic desolation at the time. In addition, Valerie Palmer-Mehta studies previous research on the treatment of mental disability and points out that “a dominant theme that emerges across the literature is the representation of the mentally ill as dangerous, unpredictable, and violent” (354). Steinbeck, however, displays a sympathetic attitude to the disabled in *Of Mice and Men*. The tragic ending of Lennie’s euthanasia suggests how the ranch society is intolerant toward those who are socially disadvantaged and how a capital-based society tends to exclude heterogeneity.

### **Enhancement of the Illusory Pastoral**

Steinbeck closely focuses on a few farm workers: George, who is a small and smart migrant worker; Lennie, who is George’s friend and a huge powerful man with an intellectual disability; Slim, who is a respectable foreman; Candy, who is an old handyman whose hand has been amputated; and Crooks, who is a lonely black stable buck with a crooked spine. Steinbeck obviously depicts at least three characters with disabilities: two physically handicapped, Candy and Crooks, and one mentally handicapped, Lennie.

I will first scrutinize the pastoral dream of the two physically handicapped men, Candy and Crooks, and elucidate the reinforcement of an illusory pastoral place relying on solidarity among the socially disadvantaged. As Thomas Fahy points out, their damaged bodies are a “type of albatross that prevents men from achieving a better life”

(6), and Steinbeck depicts their uncomfortable lives as they are repressed as the socially disadvantaged on the farm. Therefore, they are attracted to George and Lennie's enchanted dream of a little land, and they too regard the georgic landscape as a refuge from the harsh reality of the ranch.

First, the old man, Candy, whose hand has been amputated because of an accident on the farm, is depicted as socially disadvantaged since farm labor assumes that workers should be physically healthy and strong. While he has a cleaning job at the bunkhouse because he is too old and crippled to do hard manual labor, he worries that he might be put in an asylum if he is no longer able to do the chores: "they'll can me purty soon. Jus' as soon as I can't swamp out no bunk houses they'll put me on the county" (*MM* 60).

Physical toughness is a prerequisite to work at the ranch community. The ranch foreman, Slim, obviously assigns primary importance to physical toughness and a healthy body. His creed is based on the virtue of utility of the labor force which underscores the management of the capitalist farm society. When Carlson, one of the workers at the ranch, argues that Candy's old dog should be euthanized because the dog's body is stiff with rheumatism and stinks, Slim decides to kill the dog: "Carl's right, Candy. That dog ain't no good to himself. I wisht somebody'd shoot me if I got old an' a cripple" (*MM* 46). Given that Slim is depicted as an omnipotent character, his statement represents a sense of value of the community toward the physically disabled.<sup>4</sup> Although Michael S. Kimmel observes that "John Steinbeck conferred a heroic dignity on the pained effort of the working class to make themselves" (143), Slim's decision ruthlessly reveals that the heroic dignity applies only to the able-bodied workman.

Candy seems to regard the agrarian dream which George and Lennie indulge as a refuge from the harsh reality of the ranch community. He thinks that he would enjoy an

ideal modest life, which does not rely on hard labor as opposed to the reality of the ranch, on an ideal plot of land where socially disadvantaged people could jointly construct a utopia. Candy subsequently confides his anxiety and suggests his participation in George and Lennie's dream:

Maybe if I give you my money, you'll let me hoe in the garden even after I ain't no good at it. An' I'll wash dishes an' little chicken stuff like that. But I'll be on our own place, an' I'll be let to work on our own place." He said miserably, "You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They says he wasn't no good to himself nor nobody else. When they can me here I wisht somebody'd shoot me. But they won't do nothing like that. I won't have no place to go, an' I can't get no more jobs. I'll have thirty dollars more comin', time you guys is ready to quit. (*MM* 60)

He wants to belong to George and Lennie's ideal pastoral, a utopia of the socially disadvantaged, and offers money to realize it. He mentions that he can live with them by doing some chores even though he is physically disabled, thinking that the georgic pastoral ideal does not require physical strength. In contrast to his old dog, which is killed partly because of its physical disability, Candy seeks a place which is not affected by the ideology of physical strength. Steinbeck juxtaposes Candy's anxiety and euthanasia of his old dog in order to emphasize the harsh reality that the physically disabled are excluded from the ranch.

Second, Steinbeck foregrounds the feeling of loneliness of Crooks, a black stable buck with a crooked spine. Crooks has many personal possessions in his shack "for, being alone, Crooks could leave his things about, and being a stable buck and a cripple, he was

more permanent than other men” (*MM* 66). He is basically isolated from the lives of other workers because of his race and disability. When he tells Lennie that “you got no right to come in my room. This here’s my room. Nobody got any right in here but me” (*MM* 67-8), he implies that he intentionally keeps his distance from other workers. Although Candy envies Crooks for his possession of his own place, however, Crooks lays out his feelings of alienation: “a guy needs somebody – to be near him. . . . a guy goes nuts if he ain’t got nobody. Don’t make no difference who the guy is, long’s he’s with you. . . . I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an’ he gets sick” (*MM* 72).

Crooks nostalgically tells of his childhood on a little farm with his family, and his story confirms the existence of a georgic pastoral lifestyle. Steinbeck seemingly writes Crooks’s story as a plot which emphasizes the characteristic of a lost Eden. The story of his childhood evokes an old-time georgic life which has been lost in the capitalist ranch society:

I remember when I was a little kid on my old man’s chicken ranch. Had two brothers. They was always near me, always there. Used to sleep right in the same room, right in the same bed – all three. Had a strawberry patch. Had an alfalfa patch. Used to turn the chickens out in the alfalfa on a sunny morning. My brothers’d set on a fence rail an’ watch ’em – white chickens they was. (*MM* 73)

Crooks’s memory of his family farm suggests the commitment of those who are close to each other to the pastoral lifestyle. This structure seems to be similar to the ideal pastoral of George and Lennie.

Crooks declares his commitment to the pastoral dream as well as Candy because

he thinks that the place he dreamed of, which consists of cooperation among the disadvantaged, would accept him. At first he ridicules them: “they come, an’ they quit an’ go on; an’ every damn one of ’em’s got a little piece of land in his head. An’ never a God damn one of ’em ever gets it” (*MM* 73). But he is subsequently interested in their pastoral ideal: “if you . . . guys would want a hand to work for nothing – just his keep, why I’d come an’ lend a hand. I ain’t so crippled I can’t work like a son-of-a-bitch if I want to” (*MM* 76). Crooks, who is marginalized in the ranch community, expects that the solidarity of the socially disadvantaged could make a comfortable place for them. For him, the pastoral dream suggests the restoration of an agrarian garden which existed in his childhood and the creation of a utopia of the socially disadvantaged where they could be relieved from loneliness and alienation.

The pastoral realm which offers a utopian vision of solidarity of the disabled draws a rigid border between the capitalist ranch community which is governed by the able-bodied men’s standard and the illusory pastoral land. Candy and Crooks’s proffered commitment to George and Lennie’s dream seems to reinforce solidarity of the socially disadvantaged in order to escape from the harsh reality of the ranch. Their ideal dream is, however, a mirror image of the reality of the ranch in that both communities assume homogeneity. On the one hand, the capitalist ranch society relying on the able-bodied men’s standard excludes those who are unfit for the labor force. On the other hand, George and Lennie’s pastoral dream connotes a structure of exclusion. As George asserts, “an’ it’d be our own, an’ nobody could can us. If we don’t like a guy we can say, ‘Get the hell out,’ and by God he’s got to do it. An’ if a fren’ come along, why we’d an extra bunk, an’ we’d say, ‘Why don’t you spen’ the night?’ an’ by God he would” (*MM* 58), so the solidarity of the socially disadvantaged does not necessarily welcome everyone. While

George does not clearly regulate who their friends are nor what kind of people are going to be their friends, he certainly has the right to decide if a person is suitable for the little land. While George and Lennie's dream advocates the possibility of human solidarity to enact an Edenic place, their dream is also based on homogeneity.

Although their pastoral dream connotes homogeneity as the capitalist ranch community does and its homogeneous aspect implies the limitation of their dream, it is worth noting that Steinbeck describes their dream as the possibility of solidarity among the socially disadvantaged through the agency of Lennie. When Lennie kills Curley's wife, their dream is determined to vanish, which means their pastoral dream relies on Lennie:

Now Candy spoke his greatest fear. "You an' me can get that little place, can't we, George? You an' me can go there an' live nice, can't we, George? Can't we?"

Before George answered, Candy dropped his head and looked down at the hay. *He knew.*

George said softly, "*—I think I knowed from the very first. I think I knowed we'd never do her. He [Lennie] usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we would.*" (MM 93; emphasis added)

Seeing Curley's wife's dead body, they realize their dream greatly depended on Lennie in that Lennie, a listener, allows them to narrate their dream as they independently tell Lennie the story. In other words, it is almost impossible for them to strengthen their solidarity in order to resist the norm of the ranch if Lennie disappears. In this sense, Lennie enhances the illusory dream based on solidarity which finally fails with his death.

### **Lennie's Potential Power as a Threat to the Community**

Although George and Lennie's dream of a little land enhances the possibility of a utopia based on solidarity among the socially disadvantaged, this narrative finally destroys the possibility of their solidarity by killing Lennie. If, as some scholars point out, one of the themes of the novella is human companionship realizing a dream and resisting the harsh reality of the ranch, Lennie's death means the failure of that companionship.<sup>5</sup> Why does Steinbeck's plot kill Lennie and cut off George and Lennie's companionship? I will argue that the plot of this novella suggests Lennie's potential to cross the border of the categories natural/unnatural, and the germ of his uncontrollable force cannot be accepted in agricultural capitalism. Moreover, his characteristic of crossing categories attracts Curley's wife, who is also repressed by the ideology of able-bodied men's desire in the ranch, which fosters their solidarity. The solidarity of the disadvantaged could overturn the rigid norm of the agricultural capitalist community relying on and at the same time exploiting able-bodied men. The ideology of agricultural capitalism thus excludes possible threats in order to maintain the stable community.

In contrast to Candy and Crooks who have physical disabilities, mentally retarded Lennie is physically able and adapts to hard physical labor on the ranch. Slim, whose creed is based on the virtue of utility of labor, applauds Lennie's competence and says to George: "say, you sure was right about him. Maybe he ain't bright, but I never seen such a worker. He damn near killed his partner buckin' barley. There ain't nobody can keep up with him. God awmighty I never seen such a strong guy" (*MM* 39-40). As far as Lennie's strength is controllable, the ranch society accepts him as capable labor.

Lennie, however, has the tendency of transcending the confinement of labor in agricultural capitalism. Unlike other workers, as I argue below, he is not captured by a

capitalist desire to exploit workers because of his tendency to cross categories. Lennie's attitude toward the pastoral dream is, for example, different from that of Candy and Crooks. What distinguishes him from Candy and Crooks is that Lennie pays little attention to settlement in a certain place. He instead adheres to taking care of rabbits. When he hears George's story, he often requires confirmation of his being able to take care of rabbits, and simultaneously George seems to tell the rabbit story in return for Lennie's submissiveness. George, for example, tells Lennie not to say anything to the boss and then checks if he remembers their promise:

“What you gonna say tomorrow when the boss ask you questions?”

Lennie stopped chewing and swallowed. His face was concentrated. “I . . . I ain't gonna . . . say a word.”

“Good boy! That's fine, Lennie! Maybe you're getting' better. *When we get the coupla acres I can let you tend the rabbits all right. 'Specially if you remember as good as that.*” (MM 16-7; emphasis added)

On another occasion, he regrets that “George ain't gonna let me tend no rabbit now” (MM 100) after Lennie unintentionally kills Curley's wife and then a gigantic rabbit appears in his mind and talks to him. A couple of references to the rabbits in this novella are connected to Lennie's dream of the pastoral and suggest the reason for his obsession with taking care of the rabbits. Lennie's eagerness for the pastoral is based on unconditional desire for touching something soft and smooth. Candy and Crooks, on the other hand, regard the pastoral as a relatively better place than the ranch. In other words, Lennie's dream of the pastoral adheres not to a certain place but to the action of caressing the

rabbits.

Moreover, Lennie implies his tendency of crossing the border between a confined place and an open space when he says that he will try to go away and live in the wilderness by himself in order not to bother George anymore. In the beginning of the novella, Lennie says that he intends to go to a cave:

Lennie still knelt. He looked off into the darkness across the river. "George, you want I should go away and leave you alone?"

"Where the hell could you go?"

"Well, I could. I could go off in the hills there. Some place I'd find a cave."

"Yeah? How'd you eat. You ain't got sense enough to find nothing to eat."

"I'd find things, George. I don't need no nice food with ketchup. I'd lay out in the sun and nobody's hurt me. An' if I foun' a mouse, I could keep it. Nobody'd take it away from me." (*MM* 14)

In the final chapter, again, Lennie says, "I can go right off there an' find a cave" (*MM* 99). As Lisca points out, the cave symbolizes "a retreat from the world" (Lisca, *Wide World* 135). On the opposite side of the river and on the darker hillside, it suggests a wilderness beyond a human realm. Lisca's perspective on the cave as a retreat is suggestive because it is based on the romantic point of view in which nature is primitive and innocent as opposed to "sophisticated" civilization. In contrast to the harmonious pastoral, the cave which Lennie often mentions indicates the world of raw nature which is distant from civilization. That is, Lennie has the possibility of evading society and going into the wilderness.

His tendency to reject confinement consequently reveals that he could be a dangerous element in the ranch community. Serenella Iovino observes that the mental disability is regarded as otherness which is uncontrollable in a community: “madness and disability create in fact a ‘wilderness zone’ inside the civilized or ‘tame’ area of humanity-as-normality” (67). It is remarkable that she uses the “wilderness zone” to express otherness which is beyond the norm of the community in order to foreground the arbitrariness of the boundary between humans and nature. As mentioned above, Lennie tends to want the wilderness. In other words, Lennie alludes to his possibility of crossing the border between the ranch community and the wilderness. Therefore, Lennie’s uncontrollable power implies an intrusion into the “civilized” ranch society from the outer world. Lennie’s power possibly disturbs the norm of the ranch community. Although he is an able-bodied man for carrying out hard labor as far as the ranch society controls his power, his strength is going to be repressed when it disturbs the order of the community.

Furthermore, some metaphors used to describe Lennie characterize his elusiveness. Steinbeck deploys animal images when he describes the character of Lennie; for example, he walks like “a bear drags his paws;” he drinks water from the pool “like a horse;” and according to George, he is “strong as a bull”; in the final chapter, he comes to the river “as silently as a creeping bear moves” (*MM* 4, 22, 98). These animal metaphors suggest that Lennie is considered to belong to the realm of nature, which stands for primeval innocence based on a nature/civilization dichotomy.

On the other hand, Lennie is also described as a machine. Candy tries to conceal the fact that Lennie has crushed Curley’s hand and says, “he got his han’ caught in a machine;” but Curley’s wife notices what he intends to hide, and laughingly talks to Lennie “O.K., Machine. I’ll talk to you later. I like machines” (*MM* 79). Lennie

interestingly assumes two opposed images: one is the image of animals which seemingly belongs to the realm of nature, and the other is that of the machine which is a human construction and belongs to the civilized side in the nature/civilization dichotomy. The metaphorical description of Lennie, therefore, implies Lennie's elusiveness beyond the border between the natural and human realms.

His elusiveness attracts the socially disadvantaged because he seems not to be captured by the norm of the capitalist ranch community: that is, his tendency to evade categories has the possibility of disturbing the stable community based on able-bodied men's ideology. It is thus no wonder that Lennie attracts not only Candy and Crooks dreaming of their ideal place relying on solidarity of the disadvantaged but also Curley's wife who is repressed by the able-bodied men's desire in the ranch. Although Lennie eventually kills Curley's wife, their relationship implies solidarity of the disadvantaged to resist the agricultural capitalist community.

While Wyatt observes that George and Lennie's dream is "marred by the intrusion of a woman," indicating Curley's wife is a wicked woman who destroys their dream (130), Curley's wife is actually a victim being deprived of her identity or subjectivity by the able-bodied men's desire. Nakagawa expounds a homosocial characteristic of the ranch which represses Curley's wife. Because the ranch based on the virtue of utility of labor does not accept their family, especially their wives who would not be part of the labor force, the workers' sexual desire goes to whorehouses in the town. As Nakagawa points out, the migrant workers are captured by the "combination of labor and sexual consumption called prostitution" (Nakagawa 107-8). But, according to Nakagawa, Curley's wife's sexuality cannot be consumed by the workers because she is Curley's possession. Therefore, her sexuality is distorted and she is represented as a

nymphomaniac by farm workers since she cannot be a woman in the kitchen nor an object of men's sexual desire (Nakagawa 109-11). In this sense, Curley's wife is a victim who is repressed, and she is deprived of her subjectivity by the homosocial norm of the capitalist ranch community.

In contrast to the ranch community, Lennie allows Curley's wife to claim her subjectivity. She says, "I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely [...] You [Lennie] can talk to people, but I can't talk to nobody but Curley. Else he gets mad. How'd you like not to talk to anybody" (*MM* 85), thus seeming to be alienated from the ranch community. However, she believes that she "coulda made somethin' of myself" and tells Lennie her feeling about her husband and her unrealized dream of becoming an actress (*MM* 86-7):

"Well, I ain't told this to nobody before. Maybe I ought'n to. I don't *like* Curley. He ain't a nice fella." And because she had confided in him, she moved closer to Lennie and sat beside him. "Coulda been in the movies, an' had nice clothes – all them nice clothes like they wear. An' I coulda sat in them big hotels, an' had pitchers took of me. When they had them previews I coulda went to them, an' spoke in the radio, an' it wouldn'ta cost me a cent because I was in the pitcher. An' all them nice clothes like they wear. Because this guy [an actor whom she met when she was a child] says I was a natural." (*MM* 87-8)

Similar to Candy, Crooks and George, Curley's wife also tells her dream to Lennie. While she does not have any disabilities, she seems to be repressed in the male homosocial society. Narrating her story, she builds human subjectivity through the agency of Lennie

who does not assume the norm of the ranch community. Therefore, the relationship between Lennie and Curley's wife could be a threat to the male workers in the ranch community in that Curley's possession obtains human subjectivity as a woman and disturbs the stable homosocial order of the community.

Lennie has not only physical strength but also potential power to bring the socially disadvantaged together, which could be a threat to the ranch community. As a good listener, he gives them their own voices. Lennie fosters solidarity among the socially disadvantaged, and their solidarity tends to evade the norms of the able-bodied men's community. That is, an illusory utopia of the disabled disturbs the standard of the agricultural capitalist society relying on able-bodied men's work, and Curley's wife, who acquires subjectivity, possibly disrupts the homosocial order of the community. Their solidarity through the agency of Lennie is thus cut off by a stable ideology of agricultural capitalism.

The desire to repress Lennie who could be a threat to the ranch community is disclosed by George's statement after Lennie accidentally kills Curley's wife. George suggests the idea of locking Lennie up in order not to let the other ranch workers kill him: "*I guess we gotta get 'im an' lock 'im up. We can't let 'im get away. Why, the poor bastard'd starve. . . . Maybe they'll lock 'im up an' be nice to 'im*" (MM 93; emphasis added). Moreover, he tells Slim, "*couldn't we maybe bring him in an' they'll lock him up? He's nuts, Slim. He never done this to be mean*" (MM 96; emphasis added). As George uses the term "lock up" several times, he intends to put Lennie under control. Although his violent power is a threat to the community, George still tries to "tame" the violence. In this case, Lennie, who turns out to be a threat to the community, becomes an object to be repressed. In other words, the treatment of Lennie suggests that the "wilderness zone"

should be conquered and controlled by the “civilized” community.

The tragic narrative in which George has to kill Lennie discloses the intolerance of the community. The animal and machinery metaphors associated with Lennie reveal that he is perceived as a non-human entity and is going to be viewed as “other” by the community. As Owens points out, George and Slim coming up to the highway at the end of the novella suggests the convertible friendship of two men which is the only hope to realize the dream of resisting reality.<sup>6</sup> Owens’s hopeful interpretation, however, proposes an exclusively homosocial relationship of two able-bodied men. In this sense, *Of Mice and Men* is still a tragedy for the socially disadvantaged because their possible solidarity to escape from the capitalist ranch community is thoroughly broken.

### **Intolerant Agricultural Capitalism**

George and Lennie’s pastoral dream offers migrant workers the illusion of a harmonious lifestyle. This unrealized dream which deploys a utopia of solidarity among the socially disadvantaged paradoxically indicates the hardship of marginalized migrant workers at the time and the exploitation of the labor force. The idealistic pastoral story of George and Lennie therefore becomes a refuge from the harsh reality and suggests the possibility of the commitment of the socially disadvantaged to an ideal lifestyle.

Their dream, however, connotes a contradiction. Candy and Crooks cease to find life worth living since they are marginalized, partly because of their crippled bodies. When they hear the fantastic story of George and Lennie, they feel slight hope for getting a certain place in which they can comfortably belong. Indeed, the ideal of a farm which seems to have ecological diversity endorses a harmonious lifestyle. The place is, however, a mirror image of the ranch community, implying a structure of exclusion. As mentioned

above, George's statement that he will be able to evict people he finds displeasing implies that he will have authority over the place. The exclusive structure which expels otherness from the pastoral and keeps its homogeneity contradicts the ideal of ecological diversity which is superficially endorsed by George's pastoral story. In this sense, there is a chasm between George's ideal narrative and Candy and Crooks's eagerness for commitment to the pastoral.

Moreover, their unrealized dream of a little land suggests the impossibility of the romantic image of California. While migrant workers' dream of a little land seems to endorse Quay's argument of the "Gold Rush features" of California which provides people with opportunities, they have to work to get money to obtain the land in the capitalist system. However, they no longer achieve their dream since they are exploited by the "combination of labor and sexual consumption," in Nakagawa's terms, in the agricultural capitalist community: as George says, "I'll work my month an' I'll take my fifty bucks an' I'll stay all night in some lousy cat house. Or I'll set in some poolroom till ever'body goes home. An' then I'll come back an' work another month an' I'll have fifty bucks more" (*MM* 93). That is, the land of California in the novella cannot be a repository of the golden dream of the migrant workers, and the agricultural capitalist system covers the land of California and exploits labor.

The intolerant ideology of the agricultural capitalist community finally kills Lennie and Curley's wife who are a possible threat to the norms of the community. As mentioned before, their solidarity disturbs the homosocial standard of the community and the combination of labor and sexual consumption of the ranch society. In addition, Lennie's tendency to override the rigid border of dichotomic thought such as nature/civilization and normal/abnormal, therefore, suggests that he cannot be fit into the stable capitalist

community. As George's desire to put Lennie under control implies, Lennie is repressed as otherness which could possibly disturb the order of the ranch.

In *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck especially focuses on the socially disadvantaged and depicts their harsh reality. Although the pastoral dream which is constructed by solidarity of the socially disadvantaged seems to give slight hope to them, the rigid ideology of the agricultural capitalist system breaks their solidarity. This chapter has no intention to denounce Steinbeck's treatment of disability since his plot holds judgement on disability in suspense. Instead, I want to reveal that his treatment of the socially disadvantaged reveals the limitation of the romantic image of California. Although Lennie, who disturbs the rigid border of dichotomies, has the potential to override the norms of the capitalist community and the standard of able-bodied men, Steinbeck's plot eventually suggests intolerance in the capitalist ideology in that they avoid a posthuman notion which offers an alliance with otherness.

### Chapter 3

#### **The Antithesis to American Wilderness: Jack Kerouac's Mental Breakdown and the Representation of Nature in *Big Sur***

Kerouac's autobiographical novel *Big Sur* (1962) suggests a reconstruction of the idea of the wilderness, which is one of the important concepts for contemplating the relationship between humans and nature. In the previous chapter, I argued that Steinbeck's treatment of the socially disadvantaged discloses a contradiction in the romantic image of California. While Steinbeck depicts the migrant workers at the ranch in a detailed documentary style, Kerouac's writing inclines toward confessional autobiography. His mental breakdown as inscribed in this autobiographical novel reveals that the concept of American wilderness consists of convenient idealism of pure nature based on the romantic dichotomy. It is based on his sojourn in Lawrence Ferlingetti's cabin in Big Sur and it reveals his close relationship with the landscape of the West Coast.<sup>1</sup>

In the U.S., the 1960s witnessed the flourishing of environmental thought which tried to reconsider the relationship between humans and nature, such as Wallace Stegner's essay "The Meaning of Wilderness for American Civilization" (1960) which asserts the importance of wilderness preservation and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* published in the same year as Kerouac's *Big Sur*. But the 1960s was also a decade of "commercialization of nature and governmental encroachment into the wilderness," according to Rod Phillips, and Kerouac's *Big Sur* expressed "key concerns among many American nature writers and wilderness advocates such as Gary Snyder, and especially, Edward Abbey" (66). Therefore, Kerouac's *Big Sur* could be considered one of the important environmental

literary works which pays attention to the interaction between humans and the wilderness.

In this chapter, I argue that Kerouac's treatment of his wilderness experience suggests his resistance to the leading narrative of American wilderness. Although he subsequently flees from the wilderness and goes back to his home in the East, his speculative description of the relationship between his mental condition and the surroundings implies the possibility of reconstruction of the American wilderness myth. His antithesis to the American wilderness myth paves the way for emancipating the land of California from human desire to regard the place as a healer of spiritual maladies. As the wilderness cult at the time tended to romanticize raw natural landscape as a source of mental stability, people imposed their desire to regenerate themselves on the land. In this sense, the American wilderness myth reinforced the romantic image of California. However, Kerouac's ecological notion, which comes from his ethnic and religious background, disrupts the mainstream American wilderness perspective, and his way of representing his relationship with nature deromanticizes the natural landscape of Big Sur, California.

Kerouac biographies elucidate that he tried to escape from his literary and cultural fame and regain his vital energy through simple life in the woods. Joyce Johnson observes that Kerouac struggled to escape from the image of the "King of the Beats" offhandedly created by the media and to regain the vitality of his youth by overcoming his alcoholism (302). John Tytell remarks, "*Big Sur* begins with an attempt at rejuvenation from the three-year hangover of hopelessness" (207). That is, *Big Sur* seems to trace Kerouac's actual experience of the process of his revitalization.

His plan for revitalization, however, ends in failure. In *Big Sur*, although the protagonist, Jack Duluoz, who is a surrogate for Kerouac, tries to escape from bustling

city life, he cannot fully adapt himself to the seclusion in Big Sur, partly because of his alcoholism.<sup>2</sup> While Warren French points out, “he [Kerouac] tried to get away from all his problems by taking a solitary vacation at Ferlingetti’s cabin” (19), his sojourn in Big Sur is far from his intention of taking a solitary vacation because of his fear of nature and his delirium tremens. This novel emphasizes his mental breakdown and his fear of the landscape. Given the fact that his delirium tremens strongly influenced the description of nature in Big Sur, the relationship between his state of mind and the description of the natural landscape in this novel deserves greater attention.<sup>3</sup> Considering this relationship discloses Kerouac’s antithesis to the concept of American wilderness.

Although the wilderness essentially stands for an area undisturbed by human activity or uncontaminated by civilization, the wilderness is not actually a region completely isolated from human activity so much as a landscape which connotes the concept of the sublime or frontier: that is, the wilderness is tautologically a landscape which humans can recognize as the wilderness. Some natural historians, such as William Cronon and Roderick Frazier Nash, have already observed this culturally and ideologically created characteristic of the wilderness (Cronon 69; Nash, *Wilderness* 5).<sup>4</sup> Therefore, in this chapter, the wilderness is defined as landscape which evokes a sense of sublime which goes beyond the categories of human comprehension. As Henry David Thoreau observed, “what is this Titan that has possession of me? Talk of mysteries! Think of our life in nature, – daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it, – rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! The solid earth! The actual world!” (95). In essence, although wilderness is a human construct, a very conscious attempt is made to avoid its imaginative domestication in the service of human desires, including the desire for aesthetic consumption and redemption. The description of the sea in *Big Sur*, which I discuss later,

accordingly belongs to the category of the wilderness because Kerouac obviously regards the sea as a sublime object.

The concept of the wilderness in America is intimately related to the male perspective and a Puritan sense of value. These two factors have constructed an American wilderness myth in which male pioneers courageously faced the vast space to be explored, and regarded sublime nature as uncorrupted space given by God. Rick Van Noy believes that “the image of a blank and sublime space also celebrates two central myths of the American past – the free space to be explored by heroic individuals and the free, regenerative land that defines and enlarges the individual” (182), so the American wilderness myth is based on the image of strong masculinity. Considering the context of this wilderness myth, Abbey’s comment on the wilderness, “we need wilderness because we are wild animals. Every man needs a place where he can go to go crazy in peace” (229), could be interpreted as asserting the value of the wilderness from a male perspective in which wild masculinity is often treated as a virtue. In this respect, Greg Garrard argues that narratives of the wilderness have ignored “the ways in which wilderness is a site of class and gender struggle” (85). In addition, Garrard recognizes the importance of the wilderness for the spiritual realm as follows: “wilderness has an almost sacramental value: it holds out the promise of a renewed, authentic relation of humanity and the earth, a post-Christian covenant, found in a space of purity, founded in an attitude of reverence and humility” (66). In terms of religious perspective, John Gatta explains the relationship between Puritans and the wilderness as follows: “despite the Puritans’ general fear and suspicion of unsettled land, they were also disposed to regard the wild continent as uncorrupted space” (25). According to him, Puritan settlers who faced the vast wilderness of the New World attached holy significance to the natural landscape. As

some critical works on the wilderness show, both the male perspective and Puritan sense of value seem to construct the wilderness myth. In other words, the idea of American wilderness evokes a vision in which wilderness worshippers could regain vigorous manhood through experiences in raw nature.

The relationship between the protagonist and nature in *Big Sur*, however, suggests the possibility of overturning that American wilderness myth. This chapter argues that the representation of sublime nature in this novel differs from the typical concept of American wilderness. First, I will confirm that the novel certainly depicts a sublime nature which is essential to the concept of the wilderness. Descriptions of Jack's fear of nature and the image of death reveal that it inscribes the sublime condition. In the following, paying attention to the soundscape in the appended poem "Sea," I will disclose Kerouac's sense of diaspora as a French-Canadian. Then, I will elucidate his religious descriptions because his sense of identity seems to be related to his religion. His religious mind, affected by both Catholicism and Zen Buddhism, constructs an ecological thought which contains the possibility of subverting the concept of American wilderness based on a male-Puritan sense of value. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to demonstrate that Kerouac's desolate mind constructs a sense of the wilderness which deviates from an American wilderness myth which is based on the sense of adoration of pure nature.

### **Big Sur as Sublime Wilderness**

Big Sur, which attracts many tourists to its magnificent scenery, is an object which arouses Kerouac's sense of fear. Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, his classical work on the sublime, defines the word "sublime" as "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is

to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror” (35). Therefore, this chapter follows Burke’s definition of the sublime and confirms that Kerouac’s description of terrible nature at Big Sur suggests something akin to a Burkean sense of the sublime.

Contrary to Kerouac’s expectation that the sojourn in Big Sur would be “something larkish, bucolic” (*BS* 10),<sup>5</sup> his experience of seclusion in the woods amplifies his gloomy feeling. No sooner than he arrives at Big Sur, he is frightened by the atmosphere of the creek:

It’s screaming like a raging flooded river right below me – Besides it’s even *darker* down there than anywhere! There are glades down there, ferns of horror and slippery logs, mosses, dangerous plashings, humid mists rise coldly like the breath of death, big dangerous trees are beginning to bend over my head and brush my pack . . . I’m *afraid* to go down there. . . . (*BS* 12; emphasis in original)

Some expressions, such as “ferns of horror,” “dangerous plashings” and “the breath of death,” suggest his negative impression of the creek. The gothic description of scenery makes him hesitate to approach the creek. In addition, he says, “I gulp to wonder why it [Big Sur] has the reputation of being beautiful above and beyond its *fearfulness*. . .” and portrays the coastline as “horrible washing sawing” (*BS* 15; emphasis in original). In contrast to the tourist reputation of the beauty of Big Sur, he emphasizes the darkness and horror of the landscape. That is, Kerouac does not seem to be on the side of those who admire the beautiful scenery of Big Sur.

To some degree, Kerouac’s gloomy description of the scenery implies his depressed

mind due to his alcoholism. When the autumn brings a “sinister wind” to the canyon (*BS* 103), “the new Big Sun Autumn was now all winey sparkling blue which made the terribleness and giantness of the coast all the more clear to see in all its gruesome splendor” (*BS* 105). In the above quotation, Kerouac dares to use the term “winey sparkling blue” to describe the ocean, which seems to be not necessarily irrelevant to his wine addiction. According to Victor Wong and Luanne Henderson, who actually stayed at the cabin with Kerouac, he was fond of drinking Tokay wine (Gifford and Lee 275, 279). Therefore, it could be possible to interpret fearful inscriptions of nature as a reflection of Kerouac’s mental gloom caused by his alcoholism.

The name of the place also reflects his depressed mind through the landscape. While he actually stayed in Bixby Canyon, he changed its name to Raten Canyon in the novel. This is one of the factors which evokes the nightmarish image of Big Sur. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “raten,” which stands for “rat” or “mouse,” etymologically comes from Middle French. Considering the fact that Kerouac’s family background is French-Canadian and he often uses French words in the novel, it is conceivable that Kerouac dares to choose the word “raten” to project the image of rat, which is depicted as a disturbance of his peace of mind, on the canyon.

At the beginning of his sojourn, he finds a rat in the cabin. Although this rat actually disturbs his sleep, he does not completely regard it as a noxious animal which should be exterminated:

Even when one night I’m so happy sighin to turn over to resume my sleep but a rat suddenly runs over my head, it’s marvelous because I then take the folding cot and put a big wide board on it that covers both sides, so I wont sink into the

canvas confines there, and I place two old sleepingbags over the board, then my own on top, I have the most marvelous and rat free and in fact healthy-for-the-back bed in the world. (*BS* 25)

While he thinks that the rat is slightly annoying, he is overall content with the “marvelous and rat free” bed he lays out. He indeed prepares his bed to avoid the harm of the rat and he lives together in a certain harmony with the rat in the cabin.

When he comes back to the cabin for the first time in a couple of weeks, however, he finds a dead mouse in front of the cabin:

I see a dead mouse in the grass . . . but suddenly I realize and remember now for the first time how I’ve left the cover off the rat poison in Monsanto’s shelf and so this is *my mouse* . . . It’s my own personal mouse that I’ve carefully fed chocolate and cheese all summer but once again I’ve unconsciously sabotaged all these great plans of mine to be kind to living beings even bugs, once again I’ve murdered a mouse one way or the other. . . . (*BS* 110; emphasis in original)

Realizing that he has kept a rodenticide open, Kerouac is stung by his conscience. Here, he laments that his “great plans” of being kind to all living things have failed. This feeling that the plan has failed in the death of the mouse is akin to the sense of failure of his intended plan of taking a restorative solitary vacation.

The coined place name “Raten Canyon” not only amplifies the image of the dead mouse but also Kerouac’s dismal state of mind. It is worth noting that the word “rat” also connotes “a drunken person taken into custody” (Partridge 961). That is, the image of the

rat suggests that Kerouac's delirium tremens is reflected in the description of the landscape. "Raten Canyon" is, therefore, a metaphor of an isolation facility where alcoholic patients depressingly spend their days. As this dark image of "Raten Canyon" shows, Kerouac's depiction of nature contains fearfulness related to the image of death. Reflecting his depressed mind, which comes from his delirium tremens, on the landscape, his description of nature evokes terror from the scenery.

In addition, he quotes Hemingway's interpretation of terrible wilderness to describe his fear of nature in *Big Sur*. Kerouac mentions Ernest Hemingway's short story "Big Two-Hearted River" in the latter part of this novel: "as soon as I find a glade near the creek I realize it's too sinister there, like Hemingway's darker part of swamp where 'the fishing would be more tragic' somehow" (*BS* 212). This sentence reminds readers of the protagonist, Nick, who keeps away from the swamp in Hemingway's story.<sup>6</sup> Similar to Nick, Kerouac also gets a sinister impression from the glade. For Kerouac, the scenery of *Big Sur* conjures up a sense of fear. The actual sojourn in *Big Sur* is different from what he expected. In this novel, there is no bucolic life in the woods. Instead, he struggles with his delirium tremens and becomes frightened by the terrible landscape. That is, his plan to rejuvenate in nature fails and Kerouac ends up escaping from the terrible wilderness.

### **The Soundscape of the Sea**

While Kerouac depicts a sense of the sublime through conversation with the sea, he downgrades the sublime object through the medium of French words. Although the concept of the sublime etymologically suggests something occupying a superior position in a hierarchy, Kerouac's whimsical association of French words converts the sublime ocean into a subordinate concept: in other words, the sublime image of the sea as the

origin of life is transformed into a coarse image of excrement. This conversion of the concept of the sublime also suggests Kerouac's wavering sense of identity. His immanent collapse and his inscription of the sound/voice of the sea evokes degradation of the sublime wilderness, which undermines the conventional romantic concept of American wilderness.

Kerouac confronts his French-Canadian descent through inscribing the sound/voice of the sea in the appended poem "Sea," which depicts the sublime nature of Big Sur. He tries to talk with the sea, which sometimes "speaks" French. The poet expresses a conversation between the narrator and the sea. He regards the sound of the sea as the utterance of the sea and tries to communicate with it. Their conversation, which is sometimes held in French, foregrounds Kerouac's ethnic background.

The treatment of his French-Canadian identity is obviously an important issue for Kerouac. He writes a letter in response to Yvonne Le Maître, a writer who grew up in a Canadian community in Lowell, Massachusetts and wrote a book review of Kerouac's *The Town and the City* (1950): "I [Kerouac] cannot write my native language and have no native home any more, and am amazed by that horrible homelessness all French-Canadians abroad in America have" (Charters, *Selected Letters* 229). In this letter, as Hassan Melehy asserts, Kerouac's response "shows his deep awareness of the massive displacement his people have undergone" (589). Kerouac suggests that he knew the situation of French-Canadians who fled from English assimilation policy in Canada in the 19th century. According to Melehy, New England became a place for "diaspora, the migration of about 900,000 Francophones, overwhelmingly of peasant background, to the United States mainly between 1840 and 1940" (591). That is, Kerouac perceived that he was the ancestor of a repressed nation who had to flee from Canada in cultural and

linguistic exile.

During his sojourn in Big Sur, Kerouac obsessively devotes himself to listening to the sound/voice of the sea:

The bleak awful roaring isolateness, no ordinary man could do it I'm telling you  
 – *I am a Breton!* I cry and the blackness speaks back “*Les poissons de la mer parlet Breton*” (the fishes of the sea speak Breton) – Nevertheless I go there every night even tho I don't feel like it, it's my duty (and probably drove me mad), and write these sea sounds, and all the whole insane poem “Sea.” (*BS* 32-33; emphasis in original)

In the conversation with the sea, he cries out “I am a Breton,” and the sea utters “the fishes [sic] of the sea speak Breton” in French as an answer. Just prior to the above quotation, Kerouac regards the sound of the sea as an utterance: “the sea not speaking in sentences so much as in short lines” (*BS* 32).

It should be noted that the sea responds in French in the conversation. The utterance of the sea in French evokes Kerouac's mother tongue. In the poem, the sound/voice of the sea prompts the narrator to respond in French and the narrator responds to it: “Mon nom es Lebris / de Keroack – [My name is Lebris de Keroack]” (*BS* 220). Moreover, the narrator requires the sea to speak and tries to describe the sound/voice of the sea juxtaposing English with French: “parle, O, parle, mer, parle, / Sea speak to me, speak / to me” (*BS* 221). The sea responds to this in English and French: “crache tes idées, spit yr ideas, / says the sea, to me, / quite appropriate ly –” (*BS* 235). That is, the bilingual utterance fosters their conversation and Kerouac inscribes the sound/voice of the sea.

Although he writes “I cannot write my native language,” the conversation with the sound/voice of the sea allows him to inscribe his native language.

Moreover, the poem “Sea” contains the image of a mother, which is subsequently related to vulgarity. The association of ideas, such as the sea, mother and vulgarity, brings down the concept of nature from the position of a sublime and sacred object to a common entity. Kerouac describes the sea as “mer,” which stands for the sea in French, five times in the poem. This word choice suggests the image of mother because the pronunciation of “mer” is akin to “mère” which means “mother” in French.<sup>7</sup> As the narrator says, “Thalatta – Merde – Marde / de mer – Mu mer – Mak a vash – / The ocean is the mother –” (*BS* 231), onomatopoeic words related to the sound of “mer” elicit the image of “mother ocean.” At the same time, the narrator juxtaposes the image of mother with “merde” which stands for excrement. This association of images seems to reveal that Kerouac regards the sea not only as a sublime object but also as something familiar or vulgar. On the one hand, the sea is often cited as a sublime object as the origin of life. The sea, on the other hand, summons up the image of vulgarity.

Ambivalence in the image of the sea implies Kerouac’s uncertain ethnic identity. His use of French words in the conversation with the sea suggests his ambivalent identity oscillating between French-Canadian and American. Although he depicts the sublime landscape of Big Sur and his contact with raw nature, his initial intention of revitalizing himself through experience of nature eventually fails because of his mental breakdown. The projection of his depressed mental state onto the landscape, however, discloses Kerouac’s notion of diaspora which his ancestors had undergone. The evasion from the fixed meaning of the sea and the whimsical association of images based on French words are implicitly resonant with Kerouac’s notion of his ambivalent identity, wavering

between American and French-Canadian. As the narrator says that “We sea” and “The sea is We” (*BS* 224), Kerouac identifies himself with the ambivalent image of the sea. This identification endorses his wavering identity. The ambivalent treatment of the sea reveals that his wilderness narrative suggests the point of view of an immigrant being concealed by Kerouac’s fame as an American countercultural icon. That is, he inscribes an outsider’s perspective of American wilderness in his description of the landscape and exhibits a counterdiscourse to American wilderness myth.

### **Materiality in Spiritual Descriptions**

One of the important factors in constructing Kerouac’s identity is the matter of religion, which has been discussed by some scholars. Gerald Nicossia, for example, points out that Kerouac’s view of nature is “thoroughly Christian” (628). In addition, as Kerouac himself says, “Catholicism in my book is not a new tack for me. . . . There’s a lot of Catholicism in *Big Sur*. . . . I’m born a Catholic and it’s nothing new with me” (Hayes 43). Catholicism obviously has tremendous influence on him. Paul Giles, however, asserts that “he [Kerouac] became attracted by the holistic formulas of Buddhism, cherishing the Zen *nada* or void in *Tristessa* (1960), coming to think Christ had been too political, longing instead for the transcendental quietism of Eastern religions” (412). According to Giles, Kerouac had gradually devoted himself to Buddhism in his career. Ben Giamo and Matt Theado, in contrast, point out that Kerouac gets rid of Buddhism and returns to Catholicism in *Big Sur* (Giamo 180; Theado 169).<sup>8</sup> As these arguments show, there have been various outlooks on Kerouac’s religious experience.

Although there seems to be no definite conclusion on Kerouac’s religion, however, I argue that Kerouac deploys an ecological idea based on both Catholicism and Buddhism

in *Big Sur*. While he depicts sublime nature in this novel, the mixture of these two religions to construct his ecological thought makes it possible to deviate from the American wilderness myth which admires the vast natural landscape as a holy and sacred object.

While Christianity is sometimes denounced as anthropocentric thought, it contains the germ of the ecological idea. In terms of the relationship between Christianity and exploitation of natural resources, Lynn White, in his essay “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis” (1967), argues that the history of exploitation of nature is based on an idea of Christianity, which is “the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen” (1205). However, Nash subsequently rereads White’s essay and points out that the point of view of Christianity connotes egalitarianism and suggests “ecological-like unity”; that is, although Christian anthropocentrism is based on a dichotomy between humans and nature, which White regarded as the root of the destruction of natural environments, the thirteenth-century-Italian monk Saint Francis of Assisi especially thought of “no hierarchies, no chains of being, no dualism” (*Rights of Nature* 93). According to Nash, Christian thought, therefore, is not necessarily opposed to ecological awareness.

Above all, the concept of “common good” is one of the important factors in thinking about the relationship between Catholicism and ecology. The concept of “common good” in Catholicism is the idea that people have the responsibility to behave as a proper member in their community and has been “reserved to describe the human community’s well-being” (Hart 68). The “common good” is indeed an anthropocentric idea, but in Catholicism people are “to care for creation on behalf of God” and human ownership of nature is “secondary and subordinate to divine ownership” (Hart 85). Therefore, humans do not have sovereignty over the world and they are merely part of

the world. The mixture of this modest view of human beings and the concept of “common good” determines the sense of the “interdependence of members of a ‘web of life’” (Hart 86).<sup>9</sup>

Zen Buddhism also contains ecological assumptions. One of the main concepts of Zen, so-called emptiness or void, which Kerouac often mentions in his works, regards the world as an interrelationship of matter. In terms of the relationship between this concept of Zen and the environment, Simon P. James points out that “references to emptiness were present in Buddha’s teachings from the beginning: it was because things were empty (*śūnya*) of self-existence that they were said to depend for their existence on conditions seemingly outside themselves” (8). That is, the concept of emptiness describes the phenomenon that “nothing exists as autonomous and self-supporting” in Stephanie Kaza’s term (Kaza 193). This idea of the interrelationship of matter fosters the setting of “the historical, ecological, and even cosmological context of all life” (Kaza 193); namely, Zen Buddhist emptiness is connected to the ecological view of the world that all material is interdependent.

As I mentioned above, both Catholicism and Zen Buddhism contain the germ of ecological awareness. The Catholic sense of value is no longer contrary to the idea of ecology, and the Buddhist idea of emptiness also suggests the ecological notion that the world consists of interactions of materials. The germs of ecological awareness in these religious ideas seem to have had an influence on Kerouac’s relationship with the environment.

Kerouac’s ecological thought is revealed in the description that materials circulate in an ecosystem and repeat the cycle of desolation and restoration. In *Big Sur*, Kerouac inscribes the voices of humans and non-humans:

Everything is the same, the fog says “We are fog and we fly by dissolving like ephemera,” and the leaves say “We are leaves and we jiggle in the wind, that’s all, we come and go, grow and fall” – Even the paper bags in my garbage pit say “We are man-transformed paper bags made out of wood pulp, we are kinda proud of being paper bags as long as that will be possible, but we’ll be mush again with our sisters the leaves come rainy season” – The tree stumps say “We are tree stumps torn out of the ground by men, sometimes by wind, we have big tendrils full of earth that drink out of the earth” – Men say “We are men, we pull out tree stumps, we make paper bags, we think wise thoughts, we make lunch, we look around, we make a great effort to realize everything is the same” – While the sand says “We are sand, we already know,” and the sea says “We are always come and go, fall and plosh” – The empty blue sky space says “All this comes back to me, then goes again, and comes back again, then goes again, and I dont care, it still belongs to me” . . . . (BS 35-36)

He enumerates familiar things such as fog, leaves, paper bags, tree stumps, humans, sand and sky, and puts humans and non-humans in the same row. Moreover, each thing utters words which suggest their desolation and restoration in the ecosystem. As the sentence “everything is the same” epitomizes the equivalence of materials, Kerouac depicts the way things circulate equally within the ecosystem. His awareness of materials disturbs the rigid border between organic and inorganic things and implies ecological thought which deviates from the anthropocentric point of view. His ecological notion reveals that even desolation of things is a part of the function of the ecosystem. That is, the above

quoted part of *Big Sur* endorses his ecological awareness based on the circulation of things and confirms his awareness of materiality.

His awareness of materiality can be seen in his spiritual and religious description in the novel. Although he has a visual hallucination of a spiritual image, a Cross, in the middle of the wilderness, such a spiritual illusion conversely enforces his adherence to the material body:

I see the Cross, it's silent, it stays a long time, my heart goes out to it, *my whole body fades away to it, I hold out my arms to be taken away to it, by God I am being taken away my body starts dying* and swooning out to the Cross standing in a luminous area of the darkness, I start to scream because I know I'm dying but I dont [sic] want to scare Billie or anybody with my death scream so I swallow the scream and just let myself go into death and the Cross: as soon as that happens I slowly sink back to life . . . . (*BS* 205; emphasis added)

In contrast to the insubstantial illusion, he pays attention to the actual state of his body. Right after his body is drawn to the Cross and fades away, he comes back to life again. While the image of death and rebirth implies the Christian resurrection, Kerouac's sense of the cyclical process of his material body fading away and coming back to life suggests his notion of the circulation of materials.

The continuous hallucination also enforces his awareness of materiality. Kerouac intermittently has the Cross hallucination and nightmares in the night. In one of his nightmares, he meets "Vulture People" and goes to their apartment:

It's vast stone fireplace and stone stoves all *rancid* and *greasy* from a month-old Vulture People Banquet Orgy with still dozens of uncooked chickens lying around on the floor, among *garbage and bottles* – *Rancid and grease everywhere* . . . I push my way out of there pushing a huge *greasystink foodstained* tray of some sort hurrying away from the big *stinky emptiness and horror*. . . . (BS 209; emphasis added)

Kerouac emphasizes the atmosphere of filthiness. The juxtaposition of the Cross which holds privilege as a sacred symbol and the scenery which is messed up with garbage and grease reminds readers of Kerouac's strategy of juxtaposing the sublime object and vulgarity in the poem "Sea." Although Gregory Stephenson points out that "Duluoiz receives a vision of the Cross that sustains him in his struggle; and in the end, the forces of darkness and destruction are vanquished and he is delivered and redeemed" (43) and interprets the Cross as the representation of salvation, the Cross which is a symbolic and sacred object does not redeem Kerouac from the forces of destruction because he is still seized not only by the Cross but also by the place of "stinky emptiness and horror" covered with dirt. That is, while Kerouac sees the Cross, which is the sublime and sacred object, he clings to vulgar materials.

The spiritual images which contain the nightmare of vulgarity underscore his awareness of ordinary things. For Kerouac, the spiritual image of the Cross, which primarily implies salvation, entails filthy materials and consequently evokes disgust. That is, Kerouac's religious description suggests not only sacred spirituality but also vulgar materiality. Therefore, his religious thought is intimately connected with the materialist point of view.

### **Demythologizing American Wilderness**

In contrast to the Puritan view of the wilderness, Kerouac's spirituality fosters an awareness of materiality. As mentioned above, Puritans attached holy and sacred meaning to the vast wilderness: that is, they regarded material objects as symbols of their spirituality. Kerouac, however, derives the adherence to materiality from spiritual and religious hallucination. In other words, while the Puritan view of the wilderness suggests a spiritual view of nature, Kerouac's wilderness experience with his *delirium tremens* consequently invites a materialist view of nature. Therefore, Kerouac's religious description implies that the wilderness is no longer a sublime and spiritual object. His awareness of materiality divests the wilderness of the privileged status endorsed by a Puritan view of nature.

Kerouac's wilderness experience thus deviates from the myth of American wilderness based on the Puritan-male sense of value. His spiritual and religious images paradoxically deprive American wilderness of their spiritual meaning. Although Kerouac sees the hallucination of the Cross, which is certainly a symbol of spirituality, the juxtaposition of the spiritual symbol and vulgarity reveals his awareness of materiality. Kerouac's confessional writing consequently separates spirituality from the concept of the wilderness. Therefore, Kerouac's spiritual thought implies that American wilderness as a sublime object is no longer awful nor a symbol of spirituality. That is, Kerouac's spiritual description foregrounds the materiality of the wilderness.

Although *Big Sur* depicts the failure of Kerouac's intention to revitalize himself through a sojourn in the middle of the wilderness, the description of nature in this novel suggests the possibility of dismantling and reconstructing the concept of American

wilderness. The disturbed condition of Kerouac's mind does not mean a defeat so much as an opportunity to reconsider the interaction between humans and the wilderness.

## Chapter 4

### **Richard Brautigan's Deconstruction of a Romantic View of Nature in *A Confederate General from Big Sur* and *Trout Fishing in America***

Richard Brautigan's way of describing the relationship between humans and nature is clearly different from that of Kerouac in terms of literary style. While Brautigan was a contemporary of Beat writers, he was distant from them: "Brautigan had no interest in being identified with the Beat Generation and didn't consider himself to be a beatnik" (Hjortsberg 223). Hicks argues that "one of the few figures to make the transition from the West Coast 'beat' culture of the late 1950s to the 'hip' of the 1960s, Brautigan was a familiar figure in San Francisco in the late 1950s" (*In the Singer's Temple* 151). That is, he became famous as a writer at the cultural turning point and his novels drew the public's attention during the 1960s. As I argue below, however, what is shared by Kerouac's autobiographical novel and Brautigan's whimsical writing is a deromanticization of the natural realm of California.

Some scholars have pointed out that Brautigan's early novels have a pastoral mood. Terence Malley, for example, argues that *A Confederate General from Big Sur* shows the pattern of "American Pastoral" (93). William L. Stull, in addition, observes that "the intellectual pattern of *Trout Fishing [in America]* is not the prophecy but the pastoral, the intellectual pattern of *Walden*, *Moby-Dick*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and the Nick Adams stories" (79). Tony Tanner argues that "Richard Brautigan react[s] to the patterned condition of modern life which has been so variously written about in the last two decades" (393) because Brautigan's writing on the relationship between humans and nature seems to be

a response to the reality of flourishing materialistic society at the time.

Brautigan's treatment of nature, however, deviates from a traditional pastoral mode which seeks a harmonious lifestyle of humans and nature based on a romantic view of nature. This chapter, therefore, scrutinizes Brautigan's critical attitude toward the romantic view of nature. In his first two novels, *A Confederate General from Big Sur* (1964) and *Trout Fishing in America* (1967), Brautigan writes about personal experiences of nature. The first novel, *A Confederate General from Big Sur*, depicts Lee Mellon who is obsessed with an illusion of his ancestor who is considered to have been a soldier of the Civil War, and the novel portrays his reiteration of the Battle of the Wilderness in which his ancestor is assumed to have fought bravely. Brautigan's treatment of Lee's life in Big Sur implies the impossibility of the romantic wilderness experience and suggests that the place has become a sort of theme park which provides visitors with an illusion of an ideal wilderness. The reiteration of the Battle of the Wilderness in the novel consequently discloses an intrusion of the capitalist system on the natural realm of Big Sur, which is seemingly a pastiche of Hemingway's romantic experience of nature based on a nature/culture dichotomy.

The second novel, *Trout Fishing in America*, enlarges upon the theme of the relationship between nature and civilization. Brautigan deploys personified images of a symbol of pastoral "good-old-days" and turns away from the romantic pastoral ideal by writing of the amputated body of that symbolic figure. The amputated-body image infects images of nature, such as trees, flowers and creeks, which are fragmented through commerce. As I argued in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, deformity of bodies is regarded as a hindrance to achieving a pastoral dream, and the disabled, in Steinbeck's work, are alienated from the norms of the society. However, Brautigan's metaphorical description

of bodily deformity ironically depicts the way the romantic pastoral itself is devoured by flourishing consumer society. Thus, while the first novel discloses the illusion of the wilderness cult current at the time, the second novel also casts doubt on the romantic view of nature by inscribing the protagonist's whimsical experience of trout fishing and personified amputated-body images upon the pastoral.

### **Against Romanticizing the Wilderness**

In *A Confederate General from Big Sur*, Brautigan depicts the strange lifestyle of Lee Mellon, who believes that one of his ancestors had been a Confederate general. This odd story mainly takes place in Big Sur, as Kerouac's novel does, as Lee tries to escape from the materialistic society and runs into the wilderness there. With respect to the impossibility of authentic wilderness experience, Kerouac regretted that men can no longer yearn for the romantic outdoors which Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River" depicted prior to the publication of *A Confederate General from Big Sur*. Kerouac observes waning masculinity in the 1960s and states that "the P.T.A. has prevailed over every one of his desires by now, 1960's, it's no time for him to yearn for Big Two Hearted River and the old sloppy pants and the string of fish in the tent, or the woodfire with Burbon at night – It's time for motels, roadside driveins, bringing napkins to the gang in the car, having the car washed before the return trip" (*BS* 45). Using the allusion to Hemingway, he seemingly laments romantic experiences of nature being devoured by flourishing commercial society in the 1960s. Brautigan enlarges upon Kerouac's notion of the farewell to the romantic wilderness experience. He mockingly depicts Lee's personal reiteration of the Battle of the Wilderness as a war of attrition and the wilderness campaign is consumed by the holders of power in the capitalist system.

Some scholars have pointed out that Lee's seclusion suggests a desire to escape from the materially abundant society in the 1960s and the difficulty of realizing that desire. According to Malley, the novel belongs to "a broad category of American literature – stories dealing with a man going off alone . . . away from the complex problems and frustrations of society into a simpler world close to nature, whether in the woods, in the mountains, on the river, wherever" (93). In terms of rejection of materialistic society, see also Gerald Locklin, Charles Stetler and Tanner. Locklin and Stetler argue that "Brautigan characters are instinctively trying to escape from America" (72). Tanner asserts that Brautigan declares disappointment toward the reality of American society at the time: "there is a pervasive sense of loss, desolation and death in it which amounts to an implicit formulation of an attitude towards contemporary America" (406). Given that Brautigan became a "cult hero" (Malley 13) among the young who rejected the abundant and materialistic society, it is understandable that previous research has regarded the plot of this novel as a symptom of the countercultural 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Marc Chénétier pays attention to the chapter named "Attrition's Old Sweet Song" which displays the list of deaths caused by the Civil War and points out that the word "attrition" reflects the central theme of this novel (23). Regarding "attrition," Hicks also argues that "although attrition, the gradual death of the substantial world, is inevitable, it must constantly be resisted. Loss, death, and the destruction of dreams wait at every corner but can be held off by the imagination" (*In the Singer's Temple* 154). That is, the battle of this novel indicates both a pessimistic view of the materialistic society of the 1960s and resistance to society: in other words, Big Sur seems to be a geographical locus which accepts the human desire to escape from a materialist reality even though it is hard to achieve.

Previous research on *A Confederate General from Big Sur* generally interprets the wilderness of Big Sur as a utopia which enables non-conformist Lee to escape from materialistic civilization. This interpretation, however, relies on the nature/civilization dichotomy that “good” nature relieves people from “evil” civilization. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the 1960s witnessed the thriving of the wilderness preservation movement and Kerouac had originally intended to regenerate himself in the woods based on a romantic view of nature. The interpretation of the plot of Brautigan’s novel seems to be based on this cultural trend of the wilderness as refuge from the materialistic society.

Brautigan’s treatment of the wilderness, however, reveals the possibility of overriding the romantic view of the wilderness. This section discloses that the wilderness of Big Sur is not necessarily depicted as a refuge from the materialistic society by scrutinizing Lee’s seclusion and allegorical description of a capitalist system intruding upon the realm of nature. Although the wilderness of Big Sur is relatively removed from the city, a romantic experience of the wilderness enabling those trying to regenerate themselves apart from civilization is shown to be an illusion. That is, Lee’s reiteration of the Battle of the Wilderness suggests that Big Sur provides only a theme-park simulation of the romantic wilderness.

The theme of simulation is reflected in the novel’s implication that the “war story” is a humorous simulated battle story. The story opens with a pseudo history of Big Sur, an area that had belonged to the Confederate States and whimsically recounts the Battle of the Wilderness in which General Augustus Mellon had possibly participated. Lee Mellon, one of the main characters of the novel, adheres to the family legend that one of his ancestors had been a Confederate general, and he is proud of it. Although he believes that General Augustus Mellon had been “a Confederate general and a damn good one,

too” (CG 11),<sup>2</sup> however, Lee finds no record of him in the library and he is bewildered by it. After that discovery, he recreates the Battle of the Wilderness in Oakland and Big Sur as if trying to wipe out the fact that the existence of general Mellon is highly doubtful. In the latter part of the novel, Brautigan inserts interludes of Augustus Mellon being reported as missing (CG 79, 81, 85, 89, 92, 94, 97, 101, 103, 105, 107). The intermittent stories of private Mellon foreground the contradiction between Lee’s notion of his heroic ancestor and the historical reality, and the contradiction gives the whole story a mocking tone. At the same time, these narratives within the narrative, which may evoke Hemingway’s experimental middle chapters in *In Our Time* (1925), humorously depict private Mellon as a coward as opposed to the myth of the Mellon family.

Brautigan portrays Lee’s relocation as a parodic war story. In the same way private Mellon had fled from the war front, Lee also beats a hasty retreat from the city. Lee moves out of his apartment because he cannot afford to pay the rent, and then he begins a “battle” as follows:

Lee Mellon moved out of his room because he couldn’t pay the rent and went over and *lay siege to Oakland*. It was a rather impoverished *siege* that went on for months and was marked by only one *offensive manoeuver*, a daring *cavalry attack on the Pacific Gas and Electric Company*. (CG 24; emphasis added)

His “attack” on the PG&E company means that he tunneled “his way to the main gas line and tapped it” (CG 24). Brautigan uses conspicuously military terms, such as “siege,” “offensive maneuver” and “cavalry attack,” to indicate comically that Lee’s ridiculous resistance to the PG&E company is a mocking replay of the war. His battle against the

PG&E unfortunately comes to nothing and he retreats to Big Sur.

After his retreat, Lee writes to his friend Jesse, the narrator of this novel, and applauds the beauty of Big Sur, but read in the context of the comically simulated war this seems to be propaganda for his camp. Lee strongly recommends Jesse to stay at his cabin in Big Sur, saying, “[C]an’t you smell that sweet sagebrush-by-the-ocean air of Big Sur?” (*CG* 32). Lee repeatedly advertises the beautiful natural landscape of Big Sur in order to call Jesse in:

Why don’t you come down here? I haven’t any clothes on, and I just saw a whale. There’s plenty of room for everybody. . . . This morning I saw a coyote walking through the sagebrush right at the very edge of the ocean – next stop China. The coyote was acting like he was in New Mexico or Wyoming, except that there were whales passing below. . . . Come down to Big Sur and let your soul have some room to get outside its marrow. (*CG* 32-3)

One might point out that his description, “the coyote was acting like he was in New Mexico or Wyoming,” reminds readers of the desert area of the South West and Yellowstone National Park. Evoking well-known images of the wilderness, Lee implies that Big Sur certainly has the characteristics of wilderness that will enable Jesse to escape from materialistic civilization.

Yet, his propaganda also mentions, significantly, that the lifestyle in Big Sur is comfortable because he has stoves and a lantern even though there is no electricity (*CG* 34, 36). Answering Jesse’s question as to how much the living expense is, Lee writes “I’ve got a garden that grows all year around! A 30.30 Winchester for deer, a .22 for

rabbits and quail” (CG 38), implying a self-sufficient lifestyle. The wilderness of Big Sur which Lee advertises seems to be a utopia apart from civilization and “the greatest place in the world” (CG 37).

The reality of Lee’s life in Big Sur, however, turns out to be miserable. With respect to the food situation, Jesse reports “the dinner we had that evening was not very good. How could it be when we were reduced to eating food that the cats would not touch? We had no money to buy anything edible and no prospects of getting any. We were just hanging on” (CG 41). Enduring hunger reveals that the lifestyle in Big Sur is no longer self-sufficient. Furthermore, although Lee writes he can get some meat by hunting, his hunting skill is unreliable, and he gets nothing: “he shot a doe in the ass and the doe limped off into the lilac bushes and got away” (CG 42).

This desperate food situation implies that Lee’s lifestyle in the wilderness of Big Sur has aspects of the war of attrition in which descriptions of food scarcity are common. At night when Lee comes back from the hunting ground with nothing, Jesse describes the dinner as “not very good” and “to make the meal a perfect *gastronomical Hiroshima*, we had some of Lee Mellon’s bread for dessert. His bread fits perfectly the description of *hardtack served to the soldiers of the Civil War*” (CG 44; emphasis added). Using a reference to the atomic bomb to describe disgust for the bread, comparing the bread to “hardtack served to the soldiers of the Civil War,” develops the narrative of Lee’s life in the wilderness as an ironic reiteration of war. That is, Lee’s actual lifestyle in the wilderness is a darkly comical replay of the war of attrition in which his ancestor is supposed to have participated.

In short, Lee’s campaign assumes the nature/civilization dichotomy and exaggerates the resistance of the natural lifestyle to the materialistic city life. While his

propaganda succeeds in getting a companion to undertake war, the more reliable third person narrator, Jesse, reports to the reader the harsh reality of Lee's life as a war of attrition.

Contrary to the reality of Lee's life in *Big Sur*, his description of the Battle of the Wilderness attracts the interest of a consumer of the romantic wilderness illusion. Brautigan depicts one more visitor other than Jesse. Johnston Wade, a renegade businessman, visits *Big Sur* in order to escape the capitalist society and he commits to Lee's performance of the Battle of the Wilderness. According to Johnston, it is disgust with his mercenary family that leads him to come to *Big Sur*:

My wife wants to put me in the nut-house because I bought a new car: my Bentley Bomb. She wants all my money and so does my son who goes to Stanford and my daughter who goes to Mills College. . . . I run the Johnston Wade Insurance Company in San Jose. I am Johnston Wade. Just because I'm fifty-three years old and want a sports car, they think they're going to lock me up, put me away. (*CG* 88)

Johnston, an entrepreneur, has to pay his children's school fees but he buys a sports car. Therefore, he is on the verge of being put into an insane asylum. As a "guilty businessman" in Lee's terms, he intrudes upon the wilderness of *Big Sur* with a briefcase filled with money that brings capitalism into the natural setting.

Johnston's experience of nature commits to Lee's narrative war in the wilderness. His way of stating his name, "as if he were a prisoner of war, giving his name, rank and serial number" (*CG* 89), evokes the war image that he is an escapee from the army of the

capitalist system into Lee's encampment in the wilderness. It is worth noting that Johnston beats the washtub near the hole of the kitchen wall because the hole evokes the image of the Confederate soldiers in the novel: "the wind roared like the Confederate army through the hole in the kitchen wall: Wilderness – thousands of soldiers taking up miles of the countryside – Wilderness" (CG 79). The narrator Jesse observes, "I expected to see a Confederate invasion of Monterey, California, drums and banners going by on Highway I, but all I saw was Roy Earle [Johnston], free of his wife, sitting by the hole in the kitchen wall, beating on an overturned washtub" (CG 106). Although Jesse hears the sound of a war drum, it is only a comical parody of an illusory march of Confederate soldiers. Brautigan's comical description of Johnston and the hole in the kitchen wall related to the war sound implies Johnston's close participation in Lee's reiteration of the Battle of the Wilderness. That is, Lee's imaginary warfare is reinforced by Johnston's intrusion into the wilderness.

Although Johnston is described as Lee's non-conformist companion, he actually participates in Lee's performance as a visitor. Jesse describes Johnston as a visitor who finally goes back to Compton to meet his client. Therefore, Brautigan's way of writing of Johnston reveals that Lee's personal reiteration of the Battle of the Wilderness is consumed in the manner of a leisure attraction for a city dweller who has built a fortune in the capitalist system.

Johnston's temporary sojourn in Lee's campaign is similar to Hemingway's oil-billionaire character, Hopkins in "Big Two-Hearted River," published in *In Our Time* (1925). There, the relationship between Hopkins and the protagonist, Nick, suggests a confrontation between the natural realm and human exploitation of natural resources. Hopkins may be read as a social climber because he immediately breaks up his fishing

trip with Nick when he hears that he struck oil in Texas: “he [Hopkins] made millions of dollars in Texas. He has borrowed carfare to go to Chicago, when the wire came that his first big well had come in. He could have wired for money. That would have been too slow” (*IOT* 141).<sup>3</sup> The character’s behavior shows that he thinks monetary success is of far greater significance than the fishing trip, revealing a wholly different attitude not just toward his friend but toward the environment: he is making himself wealthy through the exploitation of natural resources. That is, Johnston’s experience of nature, tracing Hemingway’s description of Hopkins, reveals Johnston’s attitude that he regards nature as something pragmatically serviceable to human desires.

The reiteration of the Battle of the Wilderness discloses not only Lee’s obsession and non-conformist resistance but also an aspect of a theme-park attraction in the wilderness. Lee’s propaganda describes Big Sur as a wilderness in which people emancipate their souls and as a refuge from the materialistic society. In contrast to the harsh reality of his life in Big Sur, his campaign provides visitors with the attraction of a mock battle of the wilderness. Lee’s obsession with his ancestor creates a romantic illusion of the wilderness which is subsequently consumed by a successful member of the capitalist society.

### **The Amputation of the Personified Pastoral in *Trout Fishing in America***

Brautigan continues to write about the encroachment of civilization on the realm of nature in *Trout Fishing in America*. Although he shares the mournful notion of the end of the Hemingwayesque romantic view of nature with Kerouac and depicts the wilderness being consumed by successful part-time refugees from the capitalist system, he explores a mode of writing which disturbs the nature/civilization dichotomy by reinscribing Hemingway’s

romantic vision of nature. As scholars such as William Hjortsberg, Thomas Hearn and William L. Stull point out, Brautigan was heavily influenced by Hemingway's works and the shadow of Hemingway is evident in *Trout Fishing in America*.<sup>4</sup> The narrator mentions Hemingway's death, which is juxtaposed with the farewell to an enigmatic character named "Trout Fishing in America" in the novel. This invites readers to consider how Brautigan references and adapts Hemingway's portrayal of trout fishing in "Big Two-Hearted River."

Brautigan's approach to the human relationship with nature as it is embodied in trout fishing differs in important ways from that of Hemingway. In contrast to the pastoral impulse in Hemingway, where Nick attempts to escape from civilization into a beneficent nature, Brautigan's work recognizes that the pastoral is being devoured by the thriving consumer society of the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to Hopkins, Nick's attitude toward nature is humble. He does not view nature as a money tree. He seeks tranquil nature for its soothing properties:

Years before when he had fished crowded streams, with fly fishermen ahead of him and behind him, Nick had again and again come on dead trout, furry with white fungus, drifted against a rock, or floating belly up in some pool. Nick did not like to fish with other men on the river. (*IOT* 149)

The story here alludes to the fact that trout touched by a dry human hand are attacked by white fungus, which ultimately kills them. The description indicates that many fishermen, likely unaware of the delicate natural balance, rush into the creek to consume and destroy its bounty. Nick's aversion to the crowded streams shows a different ideal, one of peace

and solitude. That is, Hemingway clearly juxtaposes Hopkins's capitalist ideal with Nick's experience of nature which belongs within the realm of the pastoral.

One might say that Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America* represents a literary valedictory to Hemingway's pastoral romance. As Kenneth Seib insightfully claims, the allusion to Hemingway's death in the novel is "Brautigan's farewell to the Hemingway code of masculine endurance and romantic pantheism" (65). Although in this novel the narrator-protagonist attempts to escape into nature, he never manages to free himself from civilization, suggesting that flourishing materialist society has encroached on nature in the 1960s. This novel shows that civilization has further absorbed the romantic pastoral Hemingway presented in "Big Two-Hearted River." Literary scholars have tended to interpret *Trout Fishing in America* as a novel depicting the chasm between the pastoral ideal and the reality that America has already overrun that myth. As David L. Vanderwerken points out, *Trout Fishing in America* explores "the gap between ideal America and real America" (32). Malley perceives that Brautigan's novel is "an analysis of *why* the old pastoral myth of an America of freedom and tranquility is no longer viable" (151-52). Neil Schmitz's study offers a similar interpretation: "Brautigan does not write within the pastoral mode as an advocate of its vision" (110). The previous research evidently shares the opinion that this novel indicates American society and business have already devoured nature, severing any connection with the pastoral as it was inscribed by Hemingway.

This novel, however, uses elements of Hemingway's pastoral, while stirring the nature/civilization dichotomy in Hemingway's trout fishing story. Hemingway's romantic pastoral does not completely vanish but exists in the form of a commodity that is consumed in 1960s America. While the novel seemingly depicts the failure of a certain

experience of nature as it is portrayed in Hemingway's story, it further disturbs the supposed boundary between nature and civilization, demonstrating that the ideal of Hemingway's romantic pastoral has not been extinguished but more deeply subsumed by consumer culture.

Dana Phillips asserts that "nature plays a small part" (206) in so-called postmodernist fiction, and this may, at least to some degree, apply to Brautigan's novel. For example, Phillips observes that Dennis Gault in *Double Whammy* (1987) "is only inspecting his fishing gear" as opposed to Nick who "is *using* his minimal equipment" (206); that is, it provides less description and direct reflection upon nature than it does upon the camping equipment one might use in that environment.<sup>6</sup> In *Trout Fishing in America*, the narrator describes Mr. Norris's purchasing camping implements by credit card. Mr. Norris went "to a sporting goods store and *charged* his equipment," "*charged* a 9 x 9 foot dry fishing tent with an aluminum center pole," and "*charged* an Arctic sleeping bag filled with eiderdown and air mattress and air pillow to go with the sleeping bag" (*TFA* 99; emphasis added).<sup>7</sup> Mr. Norris pays much attention to the equipment considered necessary for leisure activities and comfort in nature. In addition, the repetition of the term "charged" suggests the ease of monetary exchange achieved through the credit card and implies the acceleration of consumer culture and its comforts. It reminds the readers that the experience of nature in 1960s America is integrally connected to flourishing consumer culture.

In contrast to Hemingway's pastoral, Brautigan's descriptions of trout fishing profoundly disturb the rigid boundary between nature and civilization. The most conspicuous concrete example of that disturbance is the titular "Trout Fishing in America," which appears in various forms: sometimes as an omniscient existence who gazes over

the entire history of America, sometimes as a pen pal of the narrator, on another occasion as a communist slogan. In particular, the communication between the narrator and “Trout Fishing in America” through letters personifies the concept. With respect to the personification, Jane Bennett writes that “in revealing similarities across categorical divides and lighting up structural parallels between material forms in ‘nature’ and those in ‘culture,’ anthropomorphism can reveal isomorphisms” (99). That is, the personification of nature leads the readers’ attention to identities between nature and culture (in other words, civilization) rather than the more commonly recognized differences between them. Hence, the notion of “Trout Fishing in America,” as Hemingway depicts it, and as it epitomizes the American pastoral, is divested of its categorical otherness.

The chapter “Cleveland Wrecking Yard” depicts a store named Cleveland Wrecking Yard literally selling nature – trees, flowers, and creeks, for instance – by the piece. At the store, the salesman says to the narrator:

“We’re selling the waterfalls separately of course, and the trees and birds, flowers, grass and ferns we’re also selling extra. The insects we’re giving away free with a minimum purchase of ten feet of stream.”

“How much are you selling the stream for?” I asked.

“Six dollars and fifty-cents a foot,” he said. “That’s for the first hundred feet.

After that it’s five dollars a foot.” (*TFA* 139-40)

After seeing this peculiar sight, the narrator says, “I had never in my life seen anything like that trout stream. It was stacked in piles of various lengths: ten, fifteen, twenty feet,

etc.” (*TFA* 142). What is important here is that nature itself is literally commodified. The exchange system of consumer society, mediated by money, not only violates the boundary between nature and civilization but completely subsumes the former within the latter.

In addition, the novel often depicts situations in which objects conventionally identified with nature are forced into wholly other categories. When the narrator’s stepfather speaks of “trout” as if it is “a precious and intelligent metal,” the narrator brings up the image of “trout steel” (*TFA* 3). Extending his conventional frame of reference, it reminds him of the industrial growth of America: “a steel that comes from trout, used to make buildings, trains and tunnels. The Andrew Carnegie of Trout” (*TFA* 3). The chapter “Knock on Wood (Part Two)” depicts a comical episode in which the narrator mistakenly regards “a flight of white wooden stairs” as a waterfall and knocks on the “creek [which is actually a flight of stairs] and heard the sound of wood” (*TFA* 5); in other words, distinctions between the man-made flight of stairs and the natural waterfall and creek, becomes uncertain in this chapter. Similarly, according to the narrator as he fishes, the creek is “like 12,845 telephone booths in a row with high Victorian ceilings,” and he feels as if he is “just like a telephone repairman” (*TFA* 72). As these descriptions show, no matter how deeply the narrator attempts to escape into nature, the objects of human construction, the shadow of civilization, follow.

This combination of personification and commodified nature demonstrates the traditional concept of nature has become flawed and is commodified in the exchange system of the consumer society. It is worth noting that Brautigan depicts the severance or amputation of the body of personified images of “Trout Fishing in America,” indicating the impossibility of the concept of the pastoral “good-old-days.” Personified severed-body images of the symbol of the pastoral suggest that the traditional pastoral is no longer

available.

An incarnation of the concept of the pastoral can be seen in the chapter titled “The Autopsy of Trout Fishing in America,” in which the portrayal of the body evokes a vanishing pastoral “good-old-days.” Brautigan here describes a record of the autopsy of the body of “Trout Fishing in America” as follows:

The body was in excellent state and appeared as one that had died suddenly of asphyxiation. The bony cranial vault was opened and the bones of the cranium were found very hard without any traces of the sutures like the bones of a person 80 years, so much so that one would have said that the cranium was formed by one solitary bone. . . . (*TFA* 43)

The body of “Trout Fishing in America” is described as if an old man died suddenly. His body is subjected to a postmortem and destined to be sent to England. Here, inserting the autopsy of the body, Brautigan seems to aim not only to incarnate the symbolic figure of “Trout Fishing in America” but also to imply that the traditional pastoral is doomed to vanish.

Moreover, Brautigan transforms the symbol of the pastoral into the disabled-body image of “Trout Fishing in America Shorty.” According to the narrator, in a steel wheelchair, he is “a legless, screaming middle-aged wino” and says to children on the street that “I ain’t got no legs. The trout chopped my legs off in Fort Lauderdale. You kids got legs. The trout didn’t chop your legs off. Wheel me into that store over there” (*TFA* 59). What is significant here is that the symbol of the pastoral, “Trout Fishing in America,” is personified and amputated. This too seems to suggest that the notion of a pastoral

“good-old-days” has been transformed, even mutilated. In addition, the narrator and his friend plan to send “Trout Fishing in America” to Nelson Algren who is “writing about Railroad Shorty, a hero of the Neon Wilderness,” and expect that “maybe a museum might be started. Trout Fishing in America Shorty could be the first piece in an important collection” (*TFA* 61). Their fantasy that “Trout Fishing in America Shorty” would be exhibited at a museum implies a display of the failure of the pastoral.

Although the narrator and his friend’s plan does not come to fruition, Trout Fishing in America Shorty’s imaginary career suggests that the ideal pastoral enters the fictional realm to be exploited for consumption by the movie industry:

Well, well, Trout Fishing in America Shorty’s back in town, but I don’t think it’s going to be the same as it was before. Those good old days are over because Trout Fishing in America Shorty is famous. The movies have discovered him. (*TFA* 84)

He is assigned to some movies as an actor. While the narrator’s fantasy of an exhibition of Trout Fishing in America Shorty is unrealized, Trout Fishing in America Shorty finally becomes a focus of popular public attention. This implies that the personified symbol of the failure of the traditional pastoral is displayed on screen as a fictional character and the movie industry finds a financial way to utilize him.

In this sense, the body of Trout Fishing in America Shorty suggests that while pastoral “good-old-days” are no longer available, the ideal pastoral is consumable as a profitable showpiece. The motif of amputation of the symbol of the pastoral and its exhibition suggest that even the nostalgia for the lost pastoral can be exploited by commodification in consumer culture.

Brautigan's approach to the concept of nature disturbs the boundary between nature and civilization and is thus very different from Hemingway's romantic vision of nature. That Brautigan is drawing upon Hemingway's literary legacy, however, is almost explicit. Brautigan's narrator reports, "the last time we [the character Trout Fishing in America and the narrator] met was in July on the Big Wood River, ten miles from Ketchum. It was just after Hemingway had killed himself there, but I didn't know about his death at the time" (*TFA* 120). The juxtaposition of the last meeting with "Trout Fishing in America," who can be seen to symbolize the romantic pastoral itself, with the death of Hemingway, implies that it is impossible in 1960s America to return for emotional healing to that idealized nature which Hemingway had at times referenced. What is important here is that consumer culture has apparently subsumed Hemingway's pastoral. Brautigan does not completely separate his own work from Hemingway's but attempts to modify Hemingway's code of the pastoral.

The 1960s reveals that the thriving consumer society gobbles the romantic experience of nature as a consumer object. Brautigan, as Kerouac notes, precisely observes the situation of yearning for romantic nature and of mingling Hemingway's pastoral with consumer culture through his literary imagination. He suggests in this novel that the desire for the pastoral in the 1960s, intentionally or unintentionally, commodifies Hemingway's trout fishing story. He depicts that advancing capitalist nation at a later stage. While the pastoral which Hemingway depicts implies the possibility that civilization might devour nature, civilization, in Brautigan's work, casts its shadow more fully across nature, almost swallows the experience of nature in 1960s America. Depicting nature itself as a commodity, *Trout Fishing in America* suggests that even the romantic yearning for the idea of uncontaminated nature has become an object for consumption.

“Trout fishing in America,” which symbolizes Hemingway’s pastoralism, might seem to disappear with Hemingway’s death, yet as Brautigan suggests, in 1960s America, Hemingway’s trout fishing, or romantic experience of nature has not died so much as melted into consumer society as a commodity.

### **The Impossibility of Romantic Harmony**

Brautigan enlarges the notion that the romantic experience of nature is no longer viable as materialistic society encroaches on the realm of nature. While Kerouac’s autobiographical writing indicates his mental breakdown and failure to realize his original intention of therapeutically regenerating himself in nature, Brautigan’s imaginative fiction, which focuses on the protagonists’ personal experiences, is aware of the encroachment of the flourishing civilization on the wilderness and of the impossibility of achieving natural experience based on the romantic view of nature.

*A Confederate General from Big Sur* mockingly observes Lee’s failure to realize the romantic wilderness experience. The wilderness utopia for non-conformists in the novel is an illusion and fosters the growth of consumption of the wilderness experience. Lee’s war of attrition indicates the impossibility of escaping from the materialistic world into the “pure” wilderness. His performance of the Battle of the Wilderness at the same time suggests that the wilderness experience has become a commodity to satisfy the desire of visitors who want to participate in certain events in the Big Sur wilderness.

*Trout Fishing in America*, which also depicts the protagonist’s yearning for nature in a comical way, disturbs the border between nature and civilization. Although *A Confederate General from Big Sur* implies contact between the realm of nature and the ideology of consumerism, *Trout Fishing in America* consciously deconstructs the

boundary. Using the romantic pastoral mode of Hemingway, Brautigan reinterprets the relationship between humans and nature. Both authors make excursions into the domain of trout fishing, but Brautigan's fishing trip is less hopeful than Hemingway's. Brautigan suggests that the harmonious experience of nature is no longer viable because the advanced consumer society has devoured the romantic pastoral as commodity. Although a germ of consumer culture exists in Hemingway's story, the relationship between Nick and Hopkins embodies a concept of romantic pastoral based on dualism. On the other hand, Brautigan, detecting the seeds of consumer culture in Hemingway's pastoral, reinscribes it with the prospect of disturbing the entire nature/civilization dichotomy.

Although Brautigan's novels are less sensational than the opening of *Silent Spring* in which a mythic beautiful countryside suddenly changes into an apocalyptic scene filled with "a Shadow of Death" (Carson 10), the sense of the end of the innocent pleasure of nature prevails in his treatment of the relationship between humans and nature. For Brautigan, the human commitment to the harmonious environment is an illusion. His mocking description of naïve human desire for "pure" nature discloses that the harmonious relationship between nature and humans, if it was ever possible, has become untenable.

## Chapter 5

### Reconceptualization of Environmental Exclusion in Cynthia Kadohata's *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*

In contrast to Brautigan's notion that the romantic experience of nature is no longer viable as consumerism encroaches upon the realm of nature, Cynthia Kadohata's environmental awareness does not rely on the nature/civilization dichotomy. While Brautigan's criticism of the romantic view of nature does not attempt to foresee the future, Kadohata's novel *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* (1992) depicts a post-apocalyptic world, which indicates the possibility of overriding dichotomic thought on the environment as articulated in the nature/civilization, pure/polluted and natural/unnatural binaries. By paying attention to objects which are often excluded from the perspective of harmonious ecology, she depicts human coexistence with waste in order to maintain a "good" environment for humans. Her environmental fiction portrays the relationship between those humans who live in Los Angeles and the environment in ways that reject the romantic image of California as a state that has a special relationship to nature.

Although literary imaginings of desolation in Los Angeles seem to be quite common,<sup>1</sup> Kadohata's second novel *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*, which mainly depicts the survival of a young girl, Francie, in deteriorated Los Angeles in 2052, can be distinguished from other Los Angeles disaster narratives. Some critics of Los Angeles disaster fiction have pointed out that beneath intermittent fictional demolitions of Los Angeles there is a fear of racial hybridization and an obscure anxiety about the racial balance of the city from the point of view of white people. Mike Davis, for instance,

asserts that “the abiding hysteria of Los Angeles disaster fiction . . . is rooted in racial anxiety,” and states directly “after 1970, with the rise of a non-Anglo majority in Los Angeles County, the city turns from an endangered home into the Alien itself; and its destruction affords an illicit pleasure not always visible in previous annihilations” (281-2). In addition, David Fine and Paul Skenazy, extending the analysis to the state level, argue that “part of the grafting or hybridization process that is so characteristic of so many California stories is the mingled fear and sense of foreboding” (15). However, these racially tainted perspectives on Los Angeles disaster fiction do not necessarily correspond to Kadohata’s treatment of desolation, which foregrounds resilience of non-Anglo characters who try to cope with the desolate urban environment.

This is important because with numerous futuristic Los Angeles disaster narratives having been published, it has been said that Kadohata’s implication of disaster in this novel lacks novelty. Michiko Kakutani, for example, criticizes the novel for being “not sufficiently original or compelling” (15).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, prior to the publication of this novel, Carolyn See’s apocalyptic Los Angeles disaster novel *Golden Days* (1987), with the survival of a wealthy woman in Los Angeles after a nuclear holocaust as its theme, was published. Since these novels are similarly set in a devastated Southern California, David Fine and J. Scott Bryson simply bundle them into a category of post-apocalyptic survival novels set in Los Angeles (Fine 237; Bryson 171). That is, it is possible that this novel has sunk into obscurity as just one of many Los Angeles disaster fictions.

*In the Heart of the Valley of Love* is, however, an ambitious work examining the concept of contamination in two ways: one is the notion of “racial contamination” in the city and the other is “ecological contamination.” Firstly, through the resilience of Francie, an orphan of Asian and African descent, Kadohata counters the above-mentioned racial

contamination theory of Los Angeles disaster fiction which assumes that the city has been taken over and “contaminated” by non-whites. Secondly, Kadohata’s treatment of desolation suggests an environmental awareness which overrides the concept of the “contaminated environment,” as I will demonstrate below. That is, Francie’s sense of place in the wasteland invites a new perspective on the narrative of desolate Los Angeles being contaminated in two senses.

Kadohata’s treatment of ecological corruption may remind readers of Lawrence Buell’s term “toxic discourse,” which is defined as “expressed anxiety arising from perceived threat of environmental hazard due to chemical modification by human agency” (*Writing* 31). Buell’s concept of toxic discourse, which will be “a common denominator: a shared vocabulary, a shared concern,” assumes pollution is a common enemy and urges solidarity of all humans regardless of race, nationality, gender or class (*Writing* 34). However, this is still based on the anthropocentric dichotomy of purity and pollution. As Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky point out, pollution or impurity implies “some harmful interference with natural processes” (36). Pollution is, in other words, the opposite of a human construct of the concept of “natural.” In this respect, Ray observes that the culturally constructed distinction between “good ecological subjects and impure, dirty, unusual ‘ecological others’” shapes mainstream environmental discourses (2). Kadohata’s novel’s sense of coexistence, however, raises the possibility of overriding the anthropocentric dichotomy of the pure and the polluted which toxic discourse assumes. The setting in which the protagonist resides, an ecologically devastated city, reveals an environmental awareness which deviates from dichotomous environmentalism based on constructed binaries such as pure/polluted, natural/unnatural and civilization/nature.

Directing attention to the representation of desolation, this chapter analyzes

Kadohata's inclusive ecological awareness which challenges environmental exclusion. Kadohata's description of desolation in Los Angeles, on the one hand, distances itself from racial contamination theories of the representation of the city. At the same time, her sense of acceptance of the ecologically contaminated city suggests the possibility of overriding anthropocentric views of waste. Her "positive" interpretation of desolation challenges prejudicial ideology informing the narrative of racially and environmentally contaminated Los Angeles.

This chapter first studies the discrepancy between Kadohata's pose of rejecting her ethnicity and her actual writing around that. As I will show, although Kadohata claims that she wanted to ignore her Asian American background when she wrote this novel, the novel includes clear implications of her ethnic identity. The novel's literary blending of the inescapable nature of her ethnic identity and the sense of acceptance of the devastated environment leads her writing to environmental speculation. One aspect of that can be seen in the treatment of skin. Juxtaposing skin disease with tattooing in the novel offers a framework of acceptance. Environmental awareness, which reveals the sense of acceptance of external agency, finally reconceptualizes the idea of waste. Kadohata's positive treatment of waste dumps and discarded materials in this novel demonstrates an inclusive ecological awareness.

### **Ethnic Background**

Some scholars interpret the skin disease called "black pearl" in this novel as an ethnic marker demonstrating political resistance. The "black pearl" is one of the most conspicuous diseases in this novel: characters such as a vagrant called Max the Magician, Francie and her parents, contract black bumps under their skin which, according to

Francie, indicate “some sort of skin disease” which is not “fatal or really even harmful” (*IHVL* 11-2).<sup>3</sup> Interpreting the representation of the “black pearl,” Viet Thanh Nguyen, for instance, regards the black pearl as denoting the possibility of racial resistance: while it marks “the bodies of the nonwhite as political, as different, as poor and marginalized,” the pearls can be “reclaimed or resignified with resistant political meaning, in the same way that black skin was reclaimed and resignified during the 1960s” (151).<sup>4</sup> Jinqi Ling, to take another example, argues that the black pearl is an “embodied form of the expanding but lifeless content of the black desert that recurs in Kadohata’s novel” which “registers the profound consequence of the wartime internment on the Japanese American psyche” (503).

Previous analysis of the metaphorical disease, however, ignores the perspective of environmental injustice that poor nonwhites inhabiting the toxic environment are at risk of economically determined health disparities. In this novel, some marginalized people reside in the devastated area and suffer from diseases which are presumably caused by environmental factors. Francie’s parents, for example, die of lung cancer because “they’d probably both been exposed to a chemical or something awful” (*IHVL* 4). In addition, Jewel, a friend of Francie, suffers from uterine cancer and intermittent coughs, and she says “I’ve had a cold for a long time. Or maybe it’s the pollution getting to me. I hate this rotten town” (*IHVL* 134).

Here, I will make sense of the discrepancy between Kadohata’s pose of avoiding inscription of her ethnicity and her actual inscription of ethnic materials in order to complicate Kadohata’s treatment of environmental injustice. Reconsideration of her emphasis on environmental issues and her pose challenges the uncompromising interpretation of this novel as an act of racial resistance. The inconsistency between

Kadohata's words and actions seems to imply an integrated notion of environmental and ethnic issues.

Kadohata, first of all, tried to avoid ethnic markers when she wrote this novel. Although she intentionally set the story in the middle of the twenty-first century when "nonwhites will outnumber whites," she says racial issues are not "what the book is about" (Pearlman 118). Moreover, in an interview, Kadohata asserts "people expected me to write about being Japanese, but I couldn't keep writing about the identity issue in every book" (Lee 179). She also responds to Hsiu-chuan Lee's questions related to Kadohata's ethnic notion as follows:

HL [Hsiu-chuan Lee]: Skin, especially skin color, is always something ethnic people are concerned about. Did you have the issue of race in mind when you wrote about the skin disease?

CK [Cynthia Kadohata]: For me skin connects us to the world. It is something like a threshold that links up us and not-us. In a sense the world affects us by first affecting our skin since skin forms our bodily boundary. The skin disease is like the first warning to the world, and it symbolizes to us that something is going wrong. (Lee 168)

Kadohata does not admit the relationship between her treatment of the skin disease and ethnicity at all, and then refers to the environmental issue. Kadohata more obviously evades the topic of the unavoidable memory of Japanese Americans when Lee asks her whether the image of the desert in *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* alludes to Japanese relocation during World War II:

CK: The image of the desert in my novel actually came from an article in the *Los Angeles Times* about crimes in the desert, which mentioned that the desert was so spread out that in some towns there was no police force. People thus could escape authority there. In a sense, anything could happen in the desert. People could be free in the desert because they could escape authority. (Lee 169)

Regarding the desert simply as a refuge from authority and positively depicting it in this novel, she does not mention Japanese internment here.

In contrast to Kadohata's rejection of the ethnic theme, however, some references to ethnicity in this novel suggest the sense of inevitability of ethnic influence. Ethnic resistance against mainstream whites is, for example, suggested by the graffiti of the Anti-Aryan Association. When Francie and her boyfriend Mark drive across the desert, they point out "some graffiti on the side of an outhouse near the powerplant: AAA" which stands for "Anti-Aryan Association, a fringe group with what authorities estimated was 'not more than a hundred members'" (*IHVL* 198-9). While Francie has never met a member, the graffiti, which "must have been fairly recent," indicates the group is certainly active (*IHVL* 199). However, as shown by Francie's wondering "what the AAA [has] been doing in an industrial no-town like this" (*IHVL* 199), AAA's indistinct actions do not catch the public eye. This graffiti therefore implies AAA's racial resistance functions unobtrusively as an underground organization. A glance at AAA symbolically indicates Kadohata's stance on ethnic matters. In other words, even though Kadohata claims to evade ethnic issues in her work, as we observed in the above interview, undeclared racial resistance is inscribed in the text through the reference to an Anti-Aryan Association.

The description of the city and aerial technology also registers Asian ethnicity. It provides the image of wars related to Asian countries such as Vietnam and Japan. When Francie comes home, Mark is taping up the windows because “helicopters were planning to spray the entire city that night with Benfarzine, a new insecticide developed to stop a seemingly unstoppable fruit fly that had invaded the state” (*IHVL* 214). Given that Francie regards downtown Los Angeles as “an outpost of some sort” which implies military affairs (*IHVL* 120), Kadohata’s description of the aerial spraying of insecticides by helicopters over the city may remind readers of the aerial spraying of Agent Orange in the Vietnam War. In addition, some expressions related to this aerial spraying, such as sealing up the windows, “I [Francie] felt as if the world was falling apart” and “the whole city had just been bugbombed” (*IHVL* 215), connote nuclear fallout accompanying a bomb strike. Thus, although Kadohata does not foreground the image of wars – in contrast to See’s *Golden Days* which deals with a nuclear bombing incident, for example – her literary imagination reaches out to the cultural memory of Asian air raid victims.<sup>5</sup>

I want to argue that Kadohata’s novel includes some references to ethnicity despite her words in the above interview because her discrepancy discloses a complex interaction between ethnicity and the environment. This novel may be regarded as speculative fiction dealing with the topic of environmental injustice, but interpretation of Kadohata’s comments on the environment in her interview and actual implications of ethnic elements in this novel complicates the discourse. Although Kadohata asserts that her intention was to avoid tackling ethnic issues and emphasizes her environmental awareness, some expressions of the devastated cityscape reveal operations related to ethnic identity. In other words, the estrangement between her stance of avoiding writing about ethnicity and the actual implications of Asian Americanness within the novel indicate the value of an

integrated consideration of environmental and ethnic issues.

### **Cutaneous Sensation**

As Kadohata says in the above-mentioned interview, “the world affects us by first affecting our skin since skin forms our bodily boundary” and it is true that cutaneous sensation is one of the important themes in *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*. She juxtaposes skin disease with tattooing in this novel in order to remind readers of the relationship between humans and the environment. The skin disease evokes Alaimo’s notion of “trans-corporeality,” which traces not only “how various substances travel across and within the human body but how they *do* things – often unwelcome or unexpected things” (146; emphasis in original). When Alaimo deals with the human body as a site of material intra-actions, she especially focuses on multiple chemical sensitivity or environmental illness which disclose points of intersection of the body, the place and materials (113-15). Moreover, Simon C. Estok, referencing Alaimo’s notion of trans-corporeality, regards the human body as “a site of beleaguerment from a threatening ‘outside’” (130).

On the other hand, the representation of tattooing as a form of art could be distinguished from the trans-corporeal effect which triggers some environmental diseases. Tattooing in the novel, however, complements the trans-corporeal notion which often tends to be perceived through bodily symptoms arising from toxic chemicals. Regarding the trans-corporeal notion arising from toxicity, Timothy Clark critically observes that Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality is so devoted to the examination of the human body and toxic substances that she overlooks the significant effects of CO<sub>2</sub>, so-called greenhouse gas, which is not in itself polluting the environment (*Ecocriticism* 58-9).

Clark's claim seems to be true in that our bodies are affected by harmless entities. Kadohata's representation of tattooing especially foregrounds an interaction between "internal" and "external" through the medium of relatively harmless materials such as tattoo ink. My own argument here thus highlights a trans-corporeal awareness which does not necessarily rely on the cognition of toxic substances in *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*.

Although the skin disease called black pearl implies the characters' bodies are immersed in a toxic environment, the disease seems to be a cue to remind readers of cutaneous sensation. As Francie regards the black pearl ambivalently as "so pretty, so grotesque" (*IHVL* 10), she does not consider it as a symptom of a fatal disease even though it affects her: she says, "the disease was harmless, like acne, but I felt so tired I could scarcely move" (*IHVL* 16-7). The black pearl being treated as trivial in this novel disturbs the boundary between the internal and the external, which suggests the trans-corporeal situation.

Besides the skin disease, Kadohata's treatment of tattooing indicates receptiveness to environmental forces. Although tattooing may at first sight be viewed as the assertion of one's will, Francie comes to regard getting tattoos as an ultimately passive deed. Indeed, Betsy Huang observes that "Mark and Francie tattoo themselves not only to ascribe meaning to their bodies on their own terms, but also to highlight their difference against dominant cultural standards of beauty" (138). Through Francie, the novel evokes an understanding of tattooing as a form of self-expression, since she says that those who have tattoos are "bringing themselves out for everyone to see more clearly" (*IHVL* 110). These notions of tattooing certainly indicate one aspect of tattooing as self-expression or the declaration of free will. Significantly, however, Francie also alludes to the power

relationship between the client and the tattooist in that the client is forced to accept the tattooist's agency: "I [Francie] trusted Carl. I guess you had to trust someone to let him draw on you with a needle. It seemed weird to think that all those people out there with tattoos had trusted someone, a lot, when they didn't even know him" (*IHVL* 129). While she at first decides to have tattoos, she realizes tattooing is finally beyond her will: that is, from the point of view of Francie, the relationship between the client and the tattooist with respect to tattooing demonstrates acceptance of an external agency rather than resistance to authority or the wealthy-white-mainstream norm. She entrusts her skin to Carl, and her word "trust" elaborates her notion of acceptance of influence of the outer world, which I will return to below.

Juxtaposing the word "trust" and the representation of the desert, Kadohata enlarges the cutaneous sensation to environmental awareness. The sense of acceptance of the harsh environment is expressed at the beginning of the novel. Francie remarks the desert's severe conditions and recognizes the vulnerability of humans as she says, "[T]here was something thrilling about the desert, something violent. The desert's rare but violent rainstorms, and especially the ferocious daytime heat, made me feel thrillingly vulnerable" (*IHVL* 7). Yet she trusts the desert's climate:

In the field, under the stars faded by pollution even this far from the city, I felt trust. I trusted the desert. It didn't lie to you. The shapes of the cholla cacti and Joshua trees were clear and harsh against the sky. I sat on a rock. A lot of people over the years had sat on the rock out there. In the dirt lay cans so rusted you couldn't tell what they'd once held, and shards of glistening glass with edges as smooth as Rohn's voice when he was conning someone. I watched the endless

trail of trucks, an enormous lighted power plant towering beyond them in the town across the highway and field. (*IHVL* 8-9)

Using the word “trust” suggests that she believes in the purifying effect of the desert, little perturbed by pollution of the city, which is reminiscent of Oedipa Maas’s reliance on nature in opposition to urban pollution in one of the most conspicuous Los Angeles novels, *The Crying of Lot 49*.<sup>6</sup> Francie, in addition, foregrounds the elapse of time by mentioning those who have sat on the rock over many years, discarded cans and pieces of broken glass in order to compare the transiency of human creations with the relative imperturbability of the desert. As seen in the trails of trucks and the distant power plant in the desert, which show the contrast between civilization and raw nature, Francie’s notion of the desert climate is based on a romantic reliance on nature largely unaffected by human activities. Francie’s trust in the desert suggests her reliance on natural forces which exist beyond her will or human capacity to affect the world. The novel’s arrangement of the representation of both tattooing and the desert in connection with the word “trust” demonstrates that cutaneous sensation, which is not necessarily the reaction to toxic chemicals in this case, but is intimately related to environmental awareness.

The trans-corporeal awareness of the skin proposes a sense of acceptance of external agency beyond human control in the novel. Although tattooing indelibly marks the influence of the external environment through an entirely different process to that by which disease affects the skin, it implies some degree of acceptance of the consequences of interaction between the internal and the external. Carl’s saying that there are “no reference points” when he presses the needle into skin suggests that even the tattooist does not know the consequences of tattooing (*IHVL* 204). Kadohata’s representation of

tattooing thereby indicates the absence of predetermined results and this framework of acceptance is then applied to the relationship between the human body and the harsh environment.

### **The Awareness of “Waste-Time”**

The acceptance by the protagonist of external agency also has temporal implications. As mentioned above, Francie’s trust in the desert derives from its contrast with the transiency of human creations: in other words, the inevitability of manmade objects falling into ruin. Francie pays attention not only to refuse such as cans and shards of glass but also to “outdated billboards” in the desert:

The farther you got from the city, the more blank white or outdated billboards you saw. So few people lived in the desert it didn’t make much sense to advertise out there. We passed a board for Everest cigarettes, but Everest cigarettes didn’t even exist anymore. *That’s what I loved about the desert. It was on a different schedule than we in the city were on.* (IHVL 6; emphasis added)

The outdated billboards she loves suggest the flow of time and impermanence of human creations. Yet those billboards, though they have entered a state of disuse, still exist. These waste materials, as Francie clearly sees, now exist in a different temporality to that of the city. They disclose how the term “disuse” or “waste” is based on anthropocentric thought which is regulated by the concept of utility. As I will show, Francie’s attraction to waste materials suggests the possibility of coping with ruination by adopting a prolonged time scale exceeding the human conceptions based around the individual lifespan and human

utility.

With respect to the relationship between waste materials and time, William Viney proposes the concept of “waste-time,” defined as “a state of material being that is marked by a temporal *disorientation*” or “a time without functional, and therefore a temporal, end” in contrast to “use-time” which is “*the finite time dictated by the use and cessation of use of a given object*” (8-10; emphasis in original). In other words, while use-time is estimated to be a relatively short time which humans can perceive, waste-time indicates a time period which we cannot directly perceive. According to Viney, things which pass the expiration date based on the concept of use-time consequently belong to waste-time which is not regulated by utility. When we think of waste-time, as Viney points out, we notice that “waste is a medial condition, not just a thing of consequence but an original thing, a thing to end and a thing to begin with” (16). Viney here attempts to reconceptualize waste, asserting that it reflects not completion and stasis but process and change. Materials in a state of disuse thus demonstrate not the end of effectiveness but the continuity of things, and urge us to reconsider the relationship between materials and time. Focusing on waste and ruins, Viney points out, “projecting ruins discloses the duration and shape of time and dramatizes a conflict between material permanence and material transience” (154). Applying the concept of waste-time to disused things exposes their liminal state between permanence and transience. Francie’s attraction to waste and disuse, her acceptance of desolation, reveals a fascination with the liminal state. Francie’s attraction to discarded materials indicates that living in a devastated environment provides an opportunity to reconsider the variable state of materials in waste-time, and time in general.

Francie’s attraction to disused things can be seen not only in the description of the

desert but also in that of the city. When she stays in Mark's apartment, which she considers a "safe spot," she remembers the boathouse in Chicago where she had happily played with her friends in her younger days: "the boathouse was full of disintegrating wood, dried seaweed, and mold that grew in fabulous flowerlike shapes. . . . I was really happy out there in that boathouse, eating bread in the middle of that sort of flowering desuetude" (*IHVL* 119). Francie here once again reveals her attachment to discarded materials. At the same time, she confesses that she did not imagine how time would unfold through the life-path of her friends, such as "a girl who daydreamed ten hours a day and couldn't hold a job; a girl who had four abortions in high school; a nurse with a drug problem; a lawyer who chased ambulances, and later tried to kill himself" (*IHVL* 120). The juxtaposition of discarded materials stuffed into the boathouse and her friends' miserable lives reminds the readers of Kadohata's description of waste in the desert and the vulnerability of humans. Francie says, "I was vulnerable and invincible at the same time" (*IHVL* 120), because in the intensified present of the boathouse she feels beyond time, while the discarded materials she sees there make her aware of the transiency of things.

Elaborating the discourse on time, Francie reveals she is attached to beads because they are to her "like fossils, something priceless and timeless" (*IHVL* 140). The beads, which resemble in shape the black pearl, are also important for Francie to become aware of waste-time. Francie regards The Bead Shop as "a fossil, staying the same" in contrast to the country which moves "deeper into what newspapers and historians were already calling the Dark Century" (*IHVL* 142-43), and says "The Bead Shop was one of those places, like Mark's apartment or like that boathouse in Chicago, where I felt comfortable and serene. I fit in" (*IHVL* 145). Francie obviously likes the unperturbed characteristic of the beads in the same way as she likes outdated billboards in the desert and discarded

materials in the boathouse. Francie is attracted to things which, in one way or another, transcend the human temporal scale of “use-time.”

This explains not only her attachment to discarded things but also her sense of acceptance of desolation. Her notion of the transiency of things and her attraction to things in waste-time reveal her awareness that desolation is not a consequence but a condition of things in progress. In other words, discarded things are not the conclusion of materials but an outcome to which a temporal distinction between useful and useless based on the concept of utility applies. From that we can grasp the novel’s affirmative stance on the issue of desolation.

Francie’s attraction to things in disuse – which might be called “waste” from the perspective of use-time – finally leads her to a positive notion of two waste dumps. These waste dumps, which are usually shunned as sites of toxicity and impurity, are interestingly granted positive connotations in this novel: one inspires awe in Francie’s mind and the other offers her a motivation for residing in devastated Los Angeles. These waste dumps are not simply derelict areas where things sink into oblivion.

When Francie and Mark drive to the desert area to search for clues regarding the whereabouts of Francie’s missing uncle Rohn, a toxic waste dump fills Francie’s mind with awe:

Since the snow had let up, we resumed our drive to the motel where Auntie and I used to stay with Rohn. We passed a toxic waste dump to the south and didn’t talk much as we passed. Something about it always made me not feel like talking, as if it might hurt someone if not shown the proper respect. (*IHVL* 196)

While the novel does not describe in detail what kind of toxic waste it is, the dump is in the same desert area as a power plant and warehouses which are “Uncle Sam’s” (*IHVL* 197). This implies that it contains some sort of nuclear waste which the government intends to conceal, recalling references to bombing and nuclear fallout in the description of the city. The implication of nuclear waste, concealed because of its uncontrollability, evokes in Francie a feeling of awe. The discarded materials, which are completely useless but also harmful, stir Francie’s mind.

Francie’s fear and respect for the toxic waste dump is not simply a trait of the character but a central element in the novel. It is around a waste dump at Pasadena Arroyo that a pivotal and transformative event is narrated. Francie’s friend, Jewel, finds her father’s golden rings and confirms her family’s bond and love. Su-lin Yu thus observes that “*In the Heart of the Valley of Love* celebrates human capacity to love and hope in a wasteland” (121). Jewel’s confirmation of her family’s bond and love, in other words, converts the desolated place, the Pasadena Arroyo, into a hopeful one, the valley of love, as the title suggests. Yet this place remains a waste dump. Francie and her friends take their guns and search the arroyo along with devastated houses:

The arroyo was miles long, a valley once filled with trees and walking paths and surrounded on both sides by pastoral Pasadena homes. *Now somebody – no one was sure who – was dumping garbage into the arroyo.* And it was unsafe to walk in after dusk. Nowhere was exactly safe anymore. (*IHVL* 218; emphasis added)

Pasadena Arroyo, which had once presented a scenic view has become a garbage dump and unsafe because of mobs of rioters. This garbage dump is, however, the starting point

of Jewel's new life: breaking away from her violent boyfriend and departing for a new life in the East where she has an old friend.

Francie likewise regards the garbage dump as a starting point. As Jewel's father places the rings in the arroyo as a token of family bonds and love, Francie puts her precious things, the rocks which are mementos of her parents, on the garbage dump and decides to settle down in devastated Los Angeles even though an unpropitious incident occurs: Francie and Mark find their car stolen when they are about to leave the arroyo, and they are obliged to stay in the stinking ditch in order to let night gangs pass. In the incident, Francie recognizes the bond of love with Mark:

All night I heard the dog howling in agony. My heart broke with every howl. Mark did not let go of my hand, and I don't think he slept all night. Los Angeles was the only home either of us had ever known, and maybe this would be the only love we would ever know. For those reasons, I knew I would never leave Los Angeles.  
(*IHVL* 225)

For Francie, the garbage dump is a positive starting point, which suggests her resilience in the wasteland. The devastated and chaotic landscape, therefore, indicates not only ruination but also regeneration.

Kadohata thus depicts two waste dumps as domains of sublime experience, bestowing Francie with powers of resilience. The positive meanings of discarded materials and waste dumps indicate a sense of adapting to the incessantly changing environment. Kadohata writes about Francie's attraction to things in disuse and discarded materials and to the dysfunctional and chaotic urban landscape which "many people had

plans to leave” (*IHVL* 117). Although Kadohata depicts deteriorating situations in this novel, her representation of desolation suggests not rejection of waste but acceptance of things in waste-time. Francie’s resilience indicates that the decay of the urban environment, the enemy of those who seek “good” conditions in which to live, could become a home. Kadohata’s literary imagination thus suggests that devastated Los Angeles is not only a wasteland created by civilization but also a sphere of life.

### **Reconceptualization of Contamination**

To sum up, Kadohata’s treatment of desolation has the potential to undermine the apocalyptic narrative of a contaminated city. Francie’s resilience, for one thing, may be regarded as the antithesis of the racially biased discourse of Los Angeles disaster fiction: that is, Kadohata’s representation of desolation is removed from the fictional disaster narratives that suggest a repressed desire to sweep away a racially contaminated city. Francie’s resilience indicates a sense of acceptance of the devastated environment rather than resistance to pollution. The narrative thus inspires reconsideration of the concept of waste. Although anthropocentric ecological thought, such as discourse on toxicity and environmental injustice, express disgust at desolation as a threat to human habitation, Francie’s acceptance of desolation deviates from that one-sided view of discarded materials and wastes.

Although Kadohata has explicitly declared that the central theme of this novel is not ethnicity, her inescapable ethnic background is nevertheless inscribed in the text. The novel’s implications concerning non-white ethnicity suggest the opposite of what the author says in her interview. The discrepancy between her overt stance and the text indicates the inevitability of the appearance of one’s ethnic background. The inscription

of her ethnicity, then, is extended to environmental awareness. Francie's skin is the domain of inscription of not only ethnic connotation but also the influence of the environment. The cutaneous sensation which is perceived through skin disease and tattooing implies Kadohata's trans-corporeal awareness and the sense of acceptance of the influence of the environment. It suggests that one can no more escape the influence of one's environment than one can escape from ethnic identity.

The novel's mixing of ethnicity and the environmental issues finally produces an inclusive ecological awareness of coexistence with both other humans and waste. Although anthropocentric environmentalism tends to express nothing but disgust at contamination, Francie's attraction to discarded materials suggests the possibility of overriding such dichotomous thinking in discourse around toxicity and environmental justice. The novel's treatment of things in disuse prompts reconsideration of the concept of waste. Applying the concept of waste-time to discarded materials reveals that wastes are not simply the termination of things but an outcome and continuation of processes; in other words, waste-time suggests a perpetual motion of materials beyond human conception of use-time. Focusing on the concept of waste-time, I have argued that the portrayal of Francie's skin disease is connected to the trans-corporeal notion that some kind of transformed materials which are beyond human conception may affect her body and mind. In this sense, Kadohata's juxtaposition of cutaneous sensation and Francie's attraction to waste reveals unavoidable interactions of materials. Whether one wills it or not, materials exert influence on human bodies. Her positive interpretation of discarded materials, therefore, reconceptualizes the interaction between humans and materials beyond human conception of use-time.

In conclusion, reading desolation in *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* discloses an

inclusive environmental awareness which deviates from the anthropocentric ideology of contamination. Although discourse that fosters human solidarity in order to resist toxicity has succeeded in adopting the views of non-white minorities in white-middle-centric environmentalism, such discourse still assumes environmental exclusion in its use of the terms pollution and contamination. Kadohata's narrative of desolation, which suggests coexistence with the devastated environment, however, reveals that the discourse of the contaminated city contains an intricate intertwining of ethnicity with the environment. That is, Kadohata's second novel is an ambitious work which challenges the racial contamination theory of Los Angeles disaster fiction and anthropocentric environmentalism which assumes simple exclusion based on dichotomic thought.

In this sense, Kadohata's post-apocalyptic representation of Los Angeles resists the romantic image of California which renders the place a promised land. In this novel, Francie's hopeful regeneration does not rely on the "good" environment excluding unpleasant entities for humans. On the contrary, she converts the ideology of contamination into a breeding ground for hopeful regeneration. Kadohata's posthuman description overriding the border between internal and external is an opportunity to reconsider an anthropocentric ideology of waste or a "bad" environment. Coexistence with otherness in the novel thus shows the possibility of overriding nature/civilization, pure/polluted and natural/unnatural binaries.

## Conclusion

The Anthropocene is an era in which the impact of human activities on the planet has become too substantial to ignore. In the Anthropocene, there is no nature in an essential sense which is uncontaminated by human civilization: according to Clark, “the distinction between nature as the correlative of culture and nature in the more fundamental sense of physical systems and their laws, objects of natural science, comes to break down” (“Nature” 87). Given that the Anthropocene “undermines the nature/culture distinction itself, the difference between natural history and human history” (“Nature” 86), it is no coincidence that California literature resists and deconstructs binary oppositions of the romantic environmental discourse. Although these literary works do not directly denounce arrogant human behavior toward the environment, their environmental awareness could be seen as posthuman notions that deviate from the anthropocentric view of harmonious community with nature based on the romantic image of California. As mentioned above, the romantic imagining of nature based on dualism fixes egocentric subjectivity and tends to exclude entities which are harmful to humans. As some scholars such as Alaimo and Braidotti argue, posthuman subjectivity requires non-anthropocentric perspectives which rely on the interaction between humans and non-humans. In this regard, Carolyn Merchant, from a feminist standpoint, insightfully proposes a new environmental ethic which “would not accept the idea of subduing the earth, or even dressing and keeping the garden” because “both entail total domestication and control by human beings” (206). According to Merchant, avoiding a superior/subordinate relationship based on binary opposition will create a realm where “women, minorities,

other cultures, and the earth, along with men, will be active partners” (206). Deromanticizing the land of California I have scrutinized in this dissertation seems to be resonant with Merchant’s perspective of staying away from preserving the Edenic myth. That is, emancipating California from an anthropocentric imposition of human desires on the place enlarges not only the possible modes of describing the land but also an environmental awareness based on an inevitable human relationship with otherness in the Anthropocene.

In the Anthropocene, the representation of the place should include the interaction between humans and the place. As I observed in the Introduction, California include not only Eurocentric romanticism such as the Edenic myth and the frontier, but also outsiders’ prospects of a new life. Regarding the projection of human desires on California, Hicks remarks the third wave of California representation as follows:

If El Dorado is California’s first large metaphor, continent’s end is the second. In recent years a third has risen into view as a way of describing this region’s place on the map and in the mind. *Pacific Rim* suggests a circle. The term itself locates the western shoreline not at the outer edge of European expansion – or rather, not only there – but also on a great wheel of peoples who surround a basin, an ocean whose shores touch the South Pacific, Asia, and Latin America. The term is geographical, and it also speaks to California’s extraordinary cultural mix. (Hicks, “General Introduction” 9; emphasis in original)

Although Hicks’s observation is certainly true in terms of California’s cultural diversity, I think certain California literature additionally takes up the issue of deromanticizing the

land of California. In order to put Braidotti's theory of a posthuman subjectivity which "works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable" (49) into practice, it is important to suggest transversal alliances across humans and non-humans. Therefore, California literature considering the interaction of bodies, minds and the place should be regarded as a possible fourth wave of California representation. Literary works with which I have dealt in preceding chapters suggest non-harmonious ecology compelling us to ally ourselves with otherness because they describe California as a realm which consists of complicated interactions of humans and non-humans.

In this dissertation, I have argued that the treatment of bodies, minds and the environment in literary works of California suggests a departure from the romantic image of California that nevertheless internalizes the environment. Their descriptions, in other words, reveal that the "external" environment is intimately related to their "internal" bodies and minds. Although the previous research of California literature is often based on the idea of seeking a harmonious relationship between humans and nature, California novels in this dissertation resist the romantic image of California providing dwellers with the illusion of achieving the ideal of such harmony. As I have mentioned in each chapter, the source of the limitation of the harmonious environment can be seen in images of bodies and minds. The descriptions of bodies and minds are not only symptoms of environmental degradation but also an opportunity to reconsider the romantic view of nature. Environmental awareness in California literature, deviating from the romantic environmental discourse addresses issues of the Anthropocene which require us to rethink the relationship between humans and non-humans.

The first two chapters focused on the way the writers cast doubt on the romantic

image of California. Upton Sinclair's *Oil!*, as I argued in Chapter 1, deals with the interaction between the landscape and the industrial society and reveals that the images of crippled bodies imply that it is difficult to comprehend the environment based on a nature/culture dichotomy and to run into an uncontaminated nature which offers an illusion of harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Sinclair's environmental awareness suggests that the romantic pastoral dream is an illusion in the oil-based society of the early-twentieth century. In this novel, the description of the landscape and crippled bodies illustrates the power of the oil industry and discloses why the complex pastoral idea that seeks a rural nation through development is impossible in the early twentieth century. That is, *Oil!* reveals a trans-corporeal situation in that oil indirectly intrudes into human bodies and cripples them.

The impossibility of achieving the pastoral dream in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* arises from the fact that the ideology of agricultural capitalism exploits migrant workers' bodies. Some workers' physical condition and their pastoral dream, their "internal" realm so to speak, are actually captured by the "external" ideology of capitalism. Chapter 2 thus examined the failure of solidarity of disadvantaged characters in the ranch community. George and Lennie's unrealized pastoral dream, relying on the solidarity of the socially disadvantaged, consequently reveals intolerance of agricultural capitalist ranch society and a contradiction in the California dream. Although the romantic image of California as a golden state provides the migrant workers with the hope of capitalist success, this novella suggests that their romantic dream is entwined with the ideology of capitalism. However, those who are eager to escape the capitalist ranch society, such as Candy, Crooks and George, do not realize that they are captured and repressed by the ideology of capitalism. While the solidarity of the socially disadvantaged gives hope to them, the

rigid norm of the capitalist system breaks their solidarity. In this sense, the land of California in the novella cannot be a repository of a golden dream for those who are repressed by agricultural capitalism.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 scrutinized descriptions deromanticizing the natural landscape of California in the 1960s novels written by Kerouac and Brautigan. Their representation of the land of California seems to deconstruct the concept of nature based on the romantic view of nature. Above all, it is worth noting that both Kerouac and Brautigan are interested in excursions into the wilderness of Big Sur which, according to Henry Miller, “can be a dream come true – or a complete washout” (37). Miller, who actually settled in Big Sur, seemed to perceive a romantic relationship between humans and the place, or imposition of human desire on the place, because he continues: “if there’s something wrong with the picture, have a look at yourself in the mirror. The one difference between Big Sur and other ‘ideal’ spots is that here you get it quick and get it hard” (37). Although, for Miller, Big Sur reflected his non-conformist ideal, Kerouac and Brautigan cast doubt on the ideal of Big Sur, one of the most conspicuous tourist spots in California.

In Chapter 3, I demonstrated that Kerouac’s *Big Sur* overturns values regarding the concept of American wilderness. The protagonist’s melancholic state of mind arouses ecological thought which has the possibility of reconceptualizing the American wilderness myth based on the romantic view of nature. Although Kerouac at first tried to join the wilderness cult at the time, his mental breakdown in the wilderness of the Central Coast of California keeps him away from the romantic wilderness imagination which advocates that uncontaminated nature heals human minds. Reflecting his “internal” mind on the “external” natural landscape as a result proposes the possibility of dismantling and

reconstructing the concept of American wilderness based on an anthropocentric view of nature.

I subsequently elucidated Brautigan's cynical attitude toward the romantic view of nature in his *A Confederate General from Big Sur* and *Trout Fishing in America* in Chapter 4. Lee Mellon's obsessed mind provides the visitors with a simulated experience of the Battle of the Wilderness in *A Confederate General from Big Sur*. Brautigan enlarges Kerouac's notion of the farewell to the romantic wilderness and by foregrounding simulation mockingly depicts the wilderness experience becoming a commodity to satisfy the desire of the visitors. Moreover, he continues to explore a mode of writing which disturbs the nature/civilization dichotomy in *Trout Fishing in America*. The novel deconstructs the romantic view of nature by inscribing the protagonist's whimsical experiences of trout fishing and personified amputated-body images of the symbol of the traditional concept of the pastoral. Brautigan's way of addressing the concept of nature epitomizes the inscription of the Anthropocene since his literary works disturbs the rigid border between nature and civilization and human perception of the "external" natural realm, which implicitly heralds Braidotti's posthuman subjectivity.

Finally, I analyzed the ecological desolation in Kadohata's *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* as it disturbs the illusion of the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Her Los Angeles fiction potentially challenges typical anthropocentric environmental awareness which tends to exclude "bad" entities such as waste and pollution. Chapter 5 pays attention to Kadohata's treatment of skin and reveals that juxtaposing skin disease with tattooing in the novel shows the sense of acceptance of external agency. This environmental awareness consequently embraces environmental exclusion which disturbs the human desire for harmony with non-humans. Kadohata's

fiction portrays the relationship between those who live in Los Angeles and the environment in ways that reject the romantic image of California as a state that has a special relationship to nature.

These writers challenge one of the conspicuous themes of California literature which is reflected in Turner's frontier theory. I should acknowledge that this dissertation mainly focuses on white male writers. Given that the main purpose of this dissertation is to reveal an environmental notion which deromanticizes the romantic image of California based on the frontier and the Edenic myth, however, it should be noted that some white male writers in the twentieth century tend to cast doubt on the rejuvenation of individuals and society through confronting primitive nature of California and intentions to reenact the Edenic myth through technological development. Their literary works indicate diverse perspectives among white male writers and broaden the possibility of California environmental literature beyond the romantic view of nature.

Although studies of California literature have assumed that the literary works of California often exhibit a romantic image based on the frontier theory and romantic environmentalism, California literature has struggled with representing the landscape of California and resisted the environmental discourse around harmony. Although California has accepted the role of an illusory place upon which people impose their desires, the literary treatment of personal experiences in California offers resistance to the burden of the illusion of harmony. Literary works of California criticize the image of the state as a place that satisfies human desire for harmony with nature, and at the same time take on the challenges of the Anthropocene which urges us to reconsider the relationship between humans and non-humans. While the landscape of California has inspired the imagination of these writers, their treatment of the environment has the potential to override the

romantic imagination of California.

## Notes

### Introduction

1. The term “back to nature” comes from Peter J. Schmitt’s *Back to Nature* (1969). He defines the back-to-nature movement as city dwellers’ admiration for primitive nature in the early twentieth century. It should be distinguished from “back to the land” which is based on agrarian homesteaders’ ideal of self-sufficiency and autonomy on a smallholding. Therefore, the back-to-nature movement includes tentative experiences of nature, urban small gardens and horticulture (xxii). Schmitt observes of the back-to-nature cult as follows: “ordinary city dwellers longed for contact with the natural world, and headed for the wilderness and the suburban backyard” (4). This dissertation uses the term “back to nature” to represent a human desire for simple and primitive nature based on a romantic point of view.
2. In terms of the persistent image of the Gold Rush in California history, D. J. Waldie also observes that “hardly anyone bothers to remember how the event of 1849 set the arc of our story, but California continues to live in the remains of the Gold Rush – to their wonder and dismay” (28).
3. SueEllen Campbell, for example, observes various ecocritical approaches to Western American literature and points out one of the characteristics of the ecocritics as follows: “since many ecocritics are partly motivated by their own personal engagement with the natural world and their concern about environmental problems, the impulse towards a kind of simple and practical realism is strong” (9).
4. According to T. O’Riordan, the ecocentric mode “seeks permanence and stability

based upon ecological principles of diversity and homeostasis” (1). The technocentric mode is, on the other hand, identified by a “sense of *optimism and faith* in the ability of man to understand and control physical, biological, and social processes for the benefit of present and future generations” (11; emphasis in original).

5. Theodore Roszak, in his *The Making of a Counter Culture*, defines the counterculture as the wave of a younger generation’s critical reaction to “technocracy,” a society “in which those who govern justify themselves by appeal to technical experts who, in turn, justify themselves by appeal to scientific forms of knowledge” (8). According to him, the technocracy is the “product of a mature and accelerating industrialism” (19).
6. The term “Anthropocene” was coined by atmospheric scientists to designate a period in geological time in which humans have come to play a definitive role in the planet’s ecology. Although there are arguments about specifically what time frame the term applies to, some identify it with the Great Acceleration since 1945 in which human impacts on the Earth have been of unprecedented intensity (Clark, *Ecocriticism* 1-2; Clark, *Value* 18; Glaser, et al. 6; Morton, *Hyperobjects* 4-5).
7. With regard to monism and dualism in environmental arguments, see also James Stanescu’s “Alien Ecology, Or, How to Make Ontological Pluralism.” He observes the history of environmental dualism and monism: dualism claims that “humans were corrupting an inherently innocent, perfect, and pristine wilderness,” and monism asserts that “we are interpolated as subjects of nature” (19). Furthermore, he pays attention to the pluralistic tendency of recent environmentalism in order to override both monism and dualism: “for monists, the world is already made, and we must act simply to keep it in balance. For dualists, we must preserve the places of transcendent

wonder from the immanence of everyday life. But for the pluralist and the multinaturalists, the world is no more done being made than political geography is over. Just as there will be new nations, languages, currencies, there will be new morals, new realities, and ultimately new ecologies” (25).

## Chapter 1

1. The Teapot Dome scandal is a bribery scandal wherein the Secretary of Interior, Albert Bacon Fall, secretly leased the federal oil reserves to the Mammoth Oil Company with exclusive rights to Teapot Dome reserves. For more information of this scandal, see also Kevin Starr’s *Material Dreams* (125) and Sarah S. Elkind’s “Oil in the City” (82).
2. With respect to the difficulty of representing oil, Hitchcock points out that “it is oil’s saturation of the infrastructure of modernity that paradoxically has placed a significant bar on its cultural representation” (81). Moreover, Kerber says that petroleum “poses a significant problem for representation since we live by its effects but the material itself is often hard to grasp” (384).
3. Wyatt points out, “Sinclair may have backdated the action of his novel to 1912, but he is writing about the real-estate boom of the 1920s” (37). Regarding the development of the city in Southern California, see also Starr’s *Material Dreams* (87). Starr explains that Los Angeles promoted the purchase of lots of combined housing and drilling sites, which predicted wealth by oil production.

## Chapter 2

1. Morton also points out that capitalism needs open spaces: “‘empty’ space – space that

capitalism has left relatively undeveloped – is intrinsic to capitalism, since the laws of capital may dictate that a vacant lot is more profitable over a certain span of time than one that has been developed” (*Ecology without Nature* 86).

2. James C. Kelley mentions Steinbeck’s relationships with Ed Ricketts, a biologist, and Joseph Campbell, a mythologist, and then confirms that “the mix of ecological and mythological concepts provides a philosophical basis that pervades much of Steinbeck’s work from at least *Tortilla Flat* (1935) to *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* (1951)” (29). Moreover, Steinbeck’s ecological notion comes from his theory of non-teleological thinking and “concerns itself primarily not with what should be, or could be, or might be, but rather with what actually ‘is’ – attempting at most to answer the already sufficiently difficult question what or how, instead of why” (Steinbeck, *The Log* 112).
3. Henceforth all page-number citations for *Of Mice and Men* will be abbreviated to *MM*.
4. Steinbeck describes Slim’s character as follows: “there was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any object, be it politics or love. This was Slim, the jerkline skinner” (*MM* 35). Owens describes Slim’s character as follows: “Slim is also the familiar American cowboy hero: solitary, stoic, above common needs and desires, serving out justice from his God-like, intuitive sense of right and wrong” (Owens, “Deadly Kids” 321).
5. With respect to the theme of commitment or friendship, according to Donald Pizer, “one of the themes of *Of Mice and Men* is that men fear loneliness, that they need someone to be with and to talk to who will offer understanding and companionship”

(13). In addition, Paul McCarthy describes “one essential” element for realizing George and Lennie’s dream as “friendship” (58).

6. Owens expounds that the essential theme is companionship: “the fact that in the end as in the beginning two men walk together causes *Of Mice and Men* to end on a strong note of hope – the crucial dream, the dream of man’s commitment to man, has not perished with Lennie” (Owens, *John Steinbeck’s Re-vision* 105-6).

### Chapter 3

1. The coastal area called Big Sur extends from the south of Carmel to around San Simeon which Highway 1 traverses (Lussier 3-4). In addition, according to Rosalind Sharpe Wall, “there is no town there, no town of Big Sur – only spectacular mountains, sea-cliffs, redwoods, and a few restaurants and tourists [sic] resorts” (2). With respect to the cultural history of Big Sur, see also Kevin Starr’s *Golden Dreams*. According to Starr, 1950s avant-garde artists such as Beat writers regarded Big Sur as “an escape from the conventional” and the prevailing spirit of the place became “a seedbed of alternative value” (328, 347).
2. This novel is largely based on Kerouac’s actual life in Big Sur. Therefore, this chapter does not clearly distinguish between the protagonist Jack Duluoz and the author Jack Kerouac.
3. In terms of the treatment of the landscape in *Big Sur*, Ann Charters observes “the landscape was powerfully described as an extension of his own uniquely charged frame of mind” (*Kerouac: A Biography* 337).
4. Nash asserts the wilderness is “a state of mind” and defines the wilderness as “places people call wilderness” (5). Cronon also observes the wilderness is “quite profoundly

a human creation” (69).

5. Henceforth all page-number citations for *Big Sur* will be abbreviated to *BS*.
6. In the final part of Hemingway’s “Big Two-Hearted River,” Nick does not go fishing in the swamp: “he was going to camp. He looked back. The river just showed through the trees. There were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp” (*In Our Time* 156).
7. In Kerouac’s home, his mother’s influence was powerful. Because of the flood of Merrimack River and the Great Depression, his father’s printing business was damaged. Consequently, as “the paternal prestige in the household declined, the mother’s influence became all the more powerful” (Tytell 54). Moreover, Kerouac called his mother “Memère” [which actually means “grandmother” in Quebecois] and describes her as “the most important person” (Kerouac, *Desolation* 343) in his *Desolation Angels* (1966).
8. With respect to Kerouac’s religion, Giamo asserts that “it is clear that the quest has finally turned into crisis, culminating in an explicit renunciation of Buddhism as *the way* and a return to Catholicism” (180) in *Big Sur*. Moreover, Theado also observes “Duluoze regrets his Buddhist studies and meditations for he now sees his salvation to be a Catholic one” (169).
9. Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac*, for example, invokes the Catholic idea of the common good when he says “a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such” (240). Regarding the relationship between Leopold’s idea and Catholic thought, see also William French’s “Catholicism and the Common Good of the Biosphere” and

*Ecology and Religion* written by John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker (French 189; Grim and Tucker 63-4).

#### Chapter 4

1. With respect to the countercultural aspect of the 1960s, David Farber and Beth Bailey describe an aspect of the youth culture at the time as follows: “while the majority celebrated the material abundance that prosperity made possible, some young people scorned what they regarded as the soulless materialism of America’s consumer society” (55). In addition, Herbert Marcuse, in his “Political Preface to *Eros and Civilization*” (1966), analyzes the countercultural tendency to long for nature: “the rejection of affluent productivity, far from being a commitment to purity, simplicity, and ‘nature,’ might be the token (and weapon) of a higher stage of human development, based on the achievements of the technological society” (231).
2. Henceforth all page-number citations for *A Confederate General from Big Sur* will be abbreviated to *CG*.
3. Henceforth all page-number citations for *In Our Time* will be abbreviated to *IOT*.
4. According to Hjortsberg, Brautigan admired Hemingway’s literary works, as did many other teenagers who wanted to be writers in the 1950s (17, 61). In addition, Hearn finds “the American tradition of Twain and Hemingway” (25) in this novel. Moreover, Stull points out “Hemingway’s long shadow falls across nearly every page [of *Trout Fishing in America*]” (72).
5. Love points out that in “Big Two-Hearted River” Hemingway “followed a simple pastoral line, the hero having withdrawn from some threatening scene on the horizon into the green world” (118). Moreover, according to Carlos Baker and Philip Young,

Nick, a protagonist of the story and a World War I veteran wounded physically and emotionally, uses nature to recover (Baker 127; Young 47).

6. In his essay “Is Nature Necessary?” Phillips compares Hemingway’s “Big Two-Hearted River” with Carl Hiaasen’s novel *Double Whammy* with respect to the descriptions of nature. According to Phillips, Hiaasen’s trout fishing mainly focuses on fishing tackle and does not pay much attention to nature (205-06). Phillips’s argument suggests that in postmodernist fiction consumerism becomes more conspicuous than in modernist fiction.
7. Henceforth all page-number citations for *Trout Fishing in America* will be abbreviated to *TFA*.

## Chapter 5

1. According to Mike Davis’s bibliographic research, “the destruction of Los Angeles has been a central theme or image in at least 138 novels and films since 1909” (276).
2. Su-lin Yu summarizes some critical responses to *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*. According to Yu, besides Kakutani, Barbara Quick also rates this novel lowly. Although Yu mentions Susan Heeger’s applause for the novel, she notes that “Kadohata’s second novel was not as well received as her first” (125).
3. Henceforth all page-number citations for *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* will be abbreviated to *IHVL*.
4. With respect to political racial resistance in this novel, see also Krista Comer. She regards *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* as an allegorical narrative of Civil Rights history and class warfare which proceeds “along predictable racial lines” (409).
5. In See’s *Golden Days*, the bombing incident is manifested in “vast craters and

mountains” in the area “where before there had been none,” and the novel foregrounds nuclear fallout on Los Angeles: “we became experts on the wind. The prevailing westerlies were the ones to go out in; the Santa Anas coming down from the northeast – that in the old days used to scour the city’s air – were the ones now to make you take shelter” (157).

6. In Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), Oedipa believes in “some principle of the sea as redemption for Southern California (not, of course, her own section of the state, which seemed to need none), some unvoiced idea that no matter what you did to its edges the true Pacific stayed inviolate and integrated or assumed the ugliness at any edge into some more general truth” (37). In this regard, Keita Hatooka demonstrates the homology of Oedipa’s romanticism toward the sea and Rachel Carson’s attraction to the sea as a realm beyond human control in her *The Sea Around Us* (1951) and points out Oedipa’s environmental awareness is influenced by Carson’s earlier romantic attachment to nature (23). *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* likewise follows this romantic framework when Kadohata writes of Francie’s trust in the expansiveness of desert.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Abbey, Edward. *The Journey Home: Some Words in Defense of the American West*. Plume, 1977.

Brautigan, Richard. *A Confederate General from Big Sur*. 1964. Picador, 1973.

---. *Trout Fishing in America*. 1967. Vintage, 2002.

Callenbach, Ernest. *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston*. 1975. Banyan Tree Books, 2014.

---. *Ecotopia Emerging*. Banyan Tree Books, 1981.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring and Other Writings on the Environment*, edited by Sandra Steingraber, Library of America, 2018.

Didion, Joan. *Slouching towards Bethlehem*. 1969. 4th Estate, 2017.

Hemingway, Ernest. *In Our Time*. 1925. Scribner, 2003.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*. 1992. U of California P, 1997.

Kerouac, Jack. *Big Sur*. 1962. Penguin, 1992.

---. *Desolation Angeles*. 1966. Penguin, 1993.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. 1949. Ballantine, 1970.

London, Jack. *The Valley of the Moon*. 1913. U of California P, 1997.

Miller, Henry. *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*. New Directions, 1957.

Norris, Frank. *Novels and Essays: Vandover and the Brute, McTeague, The Octopus, and Essays*. Library of America, 1986.

Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*. 1966. Vintage, 1996.

See, Carolyn. *Golden Days*. 1987. U of California P, 1996.

Sinclair, Upton. *Oil!*. 1927. Penguin, 2008.

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. 1937. Penguin, 1992.

---. *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*. 1951. Penguin, 1995.

Thoreau, Henry David. *The Maine Woods*. 1864. Penguin, 1988.

### Secondary Sources

Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana UP, 2010.

Baker, Carlos. *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969.

Barnett, Gabrielle R. "Drive-By Viewing: Visual Consciousness and Forest Preservation in the Automobile Age." *Technology and Culture*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2004, pp. 30-54.

Bate, Jonathan. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. Routledge, 1991.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke UP, 2010.

Benson, Jackson J. *Looking for Steinbeck's Ghost*. U of Oklahoma P, 1988.

Bloodworth, William A. *Upton Sinclair*. Twayne, 1977.

Bookchin, Murray. *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. Black Rose, 1986.

Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Policy, 2013.

Bryson, J. Scott. "Surf, Sagebrush, and Cement Rivers: Reimagining Nature in Los Angeles." *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Los Angeles*, edited by Kevin R. McNamara, Cambridge UP, 2010, pp. 167-75.

Buell, Lawrence. "American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised." *American Literary History*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1989, pp. 1-29.

- . *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*. Harvard UP, 2001.
- Burke, Edmund. *On Taste; On the Sublime and Beautiful; Reflections on the French Revolution; A Letter to a Noble Lord*. Edited by Charles W. Eliot, P. F. Collier and Son, 1969.
- Campbell, SueEllen. "‘Connecting the Country’: What’s New in Western Lit Crit?" *Updating the Literary West*, edited by Western American Association, Texas Christian UP, 1997, pp. 3-16.
- Cantwell, Robert. "Upton Sinclair." *After the Genteel Tradition: American Writers since 1910*, edited by Malcolm Cowley, Peter Smith, 1937, pp. 37-51.
- Charters, Ann, editor. *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1965*. Viking, 1995.
- . *Kerouac: A Biography*. Warner, 1974.
- Chénétier, Marc. *Richard Brautigan*. Methuen, 1983.
- Christensen, Jon. "Environmental Prospects in the Twentiy-First Century." *A Companion to California History*, edited by William Deverell and David Igler, 2014, pp. 483-98.
- Clark, Timothy. "Nature, Post Nature." *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, edited by Louise Westling, Cambridge UP, 2014, pp. 75-89.
- . *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*. Bloomsbury, 2015.
- . *The Value of Ecocriticism*. Cambridge UP, 2019.
- Comer, Krista. "Western Literature at Century’s End: Sketches in Generation X, Los Angeles, and the Post-Civil Rights Novel." *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 72, 2003, pp. 405-13.
- Coodley, Lauren, editor. *The Land of Orange Groves and Jails: Upton Sinclair’s*

- California*. Heyday, 2004.
- Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon, Norton, 1995, pp. 69-90.
- Davidson, Michael. "Paralyzed Modernities and Biofutures: Bodies and Minds in Modern Literature." *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Disability*, edited by Clare Barker and Stuart Murray, Cambridge UP, 2018, pp. 74-89.
- Davis, Mike. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. Picador, 1998.
- Dickstein, Morris. *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression*. Norton, 2009.
- Douglas, Mary, and Aaron Wildavsky. *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technical and Environmental Dangers*. U of California P, 1982.
- Elkind, Sarah S. "Oil in the City: The Fall and Rise of Oil Drilling in Los Angeles." *The Journal of American History*, vol. 99, no. 1, 2012, pp. 82-90.
- Estok, Simon C. "Painful Material Realities, Tragedy, Ecophobia." *Material Ecocriticism*, edited by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, Indiana UP, 2014.
- Everson, William. *Archetype West: The Pacific Coast as a Literary Region*. Oyez, 1976.
- Fahy, Thomas. "Worn, Damaged Bodies in Literature and Photography of the Great Depression." *The Journal of American Culture*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2003, pp. 2-16.
- Farber, David, and Beth Bailey. *The Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s*. Columbia UP, 2001.
- Fine, David. *Imagining Los Angeles: A City in Fiction*. U of Nevada P, 2000.
- Fine, David, and Paul Skenazy. "Introduction." *San Francisco in Fiction: Essays in a*

- Regional Literature*, edited by David Fine and Paul Skenazy, U of New Mexico P, 1995, pp. 3-20.
- French, Warren. *Jack Kerouac*. Twayne, 1986.
- French, William. "Catholicism and the Common Good of the Biosphere." *An Ecology of the Spirit: Religious Reflection and Environmental Consciousness*, edited by Michael Barns, UP of America, 1994, pp. 177-94.
- Frye, Steven. "Introduction." *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American West*, edited by Steven Frye, Cambridge UP, 2016, pp. 1-6.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. Routledge, 2012.
- Gatta, John. *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present*. Oxford UP, 2012.
- Giamo, Ben. *Kerouac, the Word and the Way: Prose Artist as Spiritual Quester*. Southern Illinois UP, 2000.
- Gibbons, Michael T. "The Indifference of Nature and the Cruelty of Wealth." *A Political Companion to John Steinbeck*, edited by Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh and Simon Stow, UP of Kentucky, 2013, pp. 146-70.
- Gifford, Barry, and Lawrence Lee. *Jack's Book: An Oral Biography of Jack Kerouac*. St. Martin's P, 1992.
- Gifford, Terry. *Pastoral*. Routledge, 1999.
- Gilbar, Steven. "Introduction." *Natural State: A Literary Anthology of California Nature Writing*, edited by Steven Gilbar, U of California P, 1998, pp. 1-5.
- Giles, Paul. *American Catholic Arts and Fiction: Culture, Ideology, Aesthetics*. Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Glaser, Marion, et al. "New Approaches to the Analysis of Human-Nature Relations."

- Human-Nature Interactions in the Anthropocene: Potentials of Social-Ecological Systems Analysis*, edited by Marion Glaser et al., Routledge, 2012, pp. 3-12.
- Grim, John, and Mary Evelyn Tucker. *Ecology and Religion*. Island, 2014.
- Gudis, Catherine. "I Thought California Would Be Different: Defining California through Visual Culture." *A Companion to California History*, edited by William Devereil and David Iglar, Wiley Blackwell, 2014, pp. 40-74.
- Haraway, Donna. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." *Socialist Review*, vol. 80, 1985, pp. 65-108.
- . "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others." *Cultural Studies*, edited by Lawrence Grossberg et al., Routledge, 1992, pp. 295-337.
- Hart, John. "Catholicism." *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, edited by Roger S. Gottlieb, Oxford UP, 1992, pp. 65-91.
- Hart, Richard E. "Steinbeck on Man and Nature: A Philosophical Reflection." *Steinbeck and the Environment: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, edited by Susan F Beegel et al., U of Alabama P, 1997, pp. 43-52.
- Harte, James D. *A Companion to California*. U of California P, 1987.
- Hatooka, Keita. "The Sea around Them: Thoreau, Carson, and *The Crying of Lot 49*." *The Journal of the American Literature Society of Japan*, no. 7, 2009, pp. 17-31.
- Hayes, Kevin J., editor. *Conversation with Jack Kerouac*. UP of Mississippi, 2005.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. U of Chicago P, 1999.
- Hearron, Thomas. "Escape through Imagination in *Trout Fishing in America*." *Critique*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1974, pp. 25-31.
- Hicks, Jack. "General Introduction." *The Literature of California: Writings from the*

- Golden State*, edited by Jack Hicks et al., U of California P, 2000, pp. 1-13.
- . *In the Singer's Temple*. U of North Carolina P, 1981.
- Hitchcock, Peter. "Oil in an American Imaginary." *New Formations*, vol. 69, 2010, pp. 81-97.
- Hjortsberg, William. *Jubilee Hitchhiker: The Life and Times of Richard Brautigan*. Counterpoint, 2012.
- Hoffman, Frederick J. *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade*. Free, 1965.
- Huang, Betsy. *Contesting Genres in Contemporary Asian American Fiction*. Palgrave, 2010.
- Iovino, Serenella. "The Wilderness of the Human Other: Italo Calvino's *The Watcher* and a Reflection on the Future of Ecocriticism." *The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons*, edited by Serpil Oppermann, et al., Cambridge Scholars, 2011, pp. 65-81.
- James, Simon P. *Zen Buddhism and Environmental Ethics*. Routledge, 2004.
- Johnson, Joyce. *The Voice Is All: The Lonely Victory of Jack Kerouac*. Viking, 2012.
- Kakutani, Michiko. "Book of the Times: Past Imperfect, and Future Even Worse." *The New York Times*, 28 July 1992, p. 15.
- Kami, Yuji. *Sutainbekku No Monogatari Sekai – Sei to Shi to Saisei to [A Narrative World of Steinbeck: Life, Death, and Rebirth]*. Sairyusha, 2018.
- Kaza, Stephanie. "The Greening of Buddhism: Promise and Perils." *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, edited by Roger S. Gottlieb, Oxford UP, 1992, pp. 184-206.
- Kelley, James C. "John Steinbeck and Ed Ricketts: Understanding Life in the Great Tide Pool." *Steinbeck and the Environment: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, edited by Susan F Beegel et al., U of Alabama P, 1997, pp. 27-42.

- Kerber, Jenny. "Up from the Ground: Living with/in Petrocultures in the US and Canadian Wests." *Western American Literature*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2017, pp. 383-89.
- Kimmel, Michael S. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. Oxford UP, 2006.
- Kirk, Andrew. "Appropriating Technology: The Whole Earth Catalog and Counterculture Environmental Politics." *Environmental History*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2001, pp. 374-94.
- Kollin, Susan. "The American West and the Literature of Environmental Consciousness." *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American West*, edited by Steven Frye, Cambridge UP, 2016, pp. 59-72.
- . "Environments in Western American Literature." *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, Dec. 2016, doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.206.
- Kowalewski, Michael. "Modern California Nature Writing." *A History of California Literature*, edited by Blake Allmendinger, Cambridge UP, 2015, pp. 343-57.
- Labor, Earle, and Jeanne Campbell Reeseman. *Jack London*. Rev. ed., Twayne, 1994.
- Lee, Hsiu-chuan. "Interview with Cynthia Kadohata." *MELUS*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2007, pp. 165-86.
- LeMenager, Stephanie. *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century*. Oxford UP, 2014.
- Ling, Jinqi. "Speculative Fiction." *The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature*, edited by Rachel C. Lee, Routledge, 2014, pp. 497-508.
- Lisca, Peter. *John Steinbeck: Nature and Myth*. Thomas Y. Crowell, 1978.
- . *The Wide World of John Steinbeck*. Rutgers UP, 1958.
- Loklin, Gerald, and Charles Stetler. "Some Observations on *A Confederate General from Big Sur*." *Critique*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1971, pp. 72-82.
- Love, Glen A. *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment*. U of

- Virginia P, 2003.
- Lussier, Tomi Kay. *Big Sur: A Complete History & Guide*. Big Sur, 1979.
- Malley, Terence. *Richard Brautigan*. Warner, 1972.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Counterrevolution and Revolt*. Beacon, 1972.
- . "Political Preface 1966 to *Eros and Civilization*." *The Continental Philosophy Reader*, edited by Richard Kearney and Mara Rainwater, Routledge, 1996, pp. 227-34.
- Marsden, John L. "California Dreamin': The Significance of 'a Couple of Acres' in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*." *Western American Literature*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1995, pp. 291-97.
- Martin, Stoddard. *California Writers: Jack London, John Steinbeck, the Tough Guys*. St. Martin's P, 1983.
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. 1964. Oxford UP, 1981.
- Matterson, Stephen. *American Literature: The Essential Glossary*. Oxford UP, 2003.
- McCarthy, Paul. *John Steinbeck*. Frederick Ungar, 1980.
- McKusick, James C. *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology*. Palgrave, 2010.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Routledge, 1964.
- Melehy, Hassan. "Literature of Exile and Return: Jack Kerouac and Quebec." *American Literature*, vol. 84, no. 3, 2012, pp. 589-615.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*. Routledge, 2003.
- Millgate, Michael. *American Social Fiction: James to Cozzens*. Oliver and Boyd, 1964.
- Morton, Timothy. *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Harvard UP, 2007.

- . *The Ecological Thought*. Harvard UP, 2010.
- . *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. U of Minnesota P, 2013.
- Nakagawa, Yoko. "Chingin no Rouhi : Seieki no Rouhi – *Hatsukanezumi to Ningen ni okeru Sekushuaritei* [Waste of Money / Waste of Sperm: Sexuality in *Of Mice and Men*]." *Eibungakukenyu* [*Studies in English Literature*], vol. 77, no. 2, 2000, pp. 103-15.
- Nash, Roderick Frazier. *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics*. U of Wisconsin P, 1989.
- . *Wilderness and the American Mind*. 5th ed., Yale UP, 2014.
- Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America*. Oxford UP, 2002.
- Nicosia, Gerald. *Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac*. Grove, 1983.
- Noy, Rick Van. "Surveying the Sublime: Literary Cartographers and the Spirit of Place." *The Greening of Literary Scholarship: Literature, Theory, and the Environment*, edited by Steven Rosemendale, U of Iowa P, 2002, pp. 181-206.
- Olmsted, Frederick Law. *Report of State Park Survey of California*. California State, 1929.
- Orenstein, Peggy. "The Coast of Dystopia." *The New York Times Magazine*, 15 Jan. 2010, [www.nytimes.com/2010/01/17/magazine/17fob-wwln-t.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/17/magazine/17fob-wwln-t.html).
- O'Riordan, T. *Environmentalism*. Pion, 1976.
- Owens, Louis. "Deadly Kids, Stinking Dogs, and Heroes: The Beat Laid Plans in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*." *Western American Literature*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2002, pp. 319-33.
- . *John Steinbeck's Re-Vision of America*. U of Georgia P, 1985.

- Palmer-Mehta, Valerie. "Refracting Mental Illness through Disability: Towards a New Politic of Cultural Locations." *The Journal of American Culture*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2013, pp. 353-63.
- Partridge, Eric. *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English: Colloquialism and Catch-Phrases, Solecism and Catachreses, Nicknames and Vulgarisms*. Macmillan, 1984.
- Pearlman, Mickey. *Listen to Their Voices: Twenty Interviews with Women Who Write*. Norton, 1993.
- Phillips, Dana. *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America*. Oxford UP, 2003.
- Phillips, Rod. "*Forest Beatniks*" and "*Urban Thoreaus*": Gary Snyder, Jack Kerouac, Lew Welch, and Michael McClure. Peter Lang, 2000.
- Pizer, Donald. "John Steinbeck and American Naturalism." *Steinbeck Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1976, pp. 12-15.
- Quay, James. "Beyond Dreams and Disappointments: Defining California through Culture." *A Companion to California History*, edited by William Deverell and David Iglor, Wiley Blackwell, 2014, pp. 3-21.
- Ray, Sarah Jaquette. *The Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture*. U of Arizona P, 2013.
- Roszak, Theodore. *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*. Anchor, 1969.
- Schmitt, Peter. *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1990.
- Schmitz, Neil. "Richard Brautigan and the Modern Pastoral." *Modern Fiction Studies*,

vol. 19, no. 1, 1973, pp. 109-25.

Scranton, Roy. "Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene." *The New York Times*, 10 Nov. 2013, [opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/10/learning-how-to-die-in-the-anthropocene/](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/10/learning-how-to-die-in-the-anthropocene/).

Seib, Kenneth. "Trout Fishing in America: Brautigan's Funky Fishing Yarn." *Critique*, vol.13, no. 2, 1971, pp. 63-71.

Stanescu, James. "Alien Ecology, Or, How to Make Ontological Pluralism." *The Ethics and Rhetoric of Invasion Ecology*, edited by James Stanescu and Kevin Cummings, Lexington Books, 2017, pp. 17-30.

Starr, Kevin. *Americans and the California Dream 1850-1915*. Oxford UP, 1973.

---. *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era*. Oxford UP, 1985.

---. *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s*. Oxford UP, 1990.

---. *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963*. Oxford UP, 2009.

Stegner, Wallace. "The Meaning of Wilderness for American Civilization." *American Environmentalism: Reading in Conservation History*, edited by Roderick Frazier Nash, McGraw-Hill, 1990, pp. 175-80.

Stephenson, Gregory. *The Daybreak Boys: Essays on the Literature of the Beat Generation*. Southern Illinois UP, 1990.

Stull, William L. "Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*: Notes of a Native Son." *American Literature*, vol. 56, no. 1, 1984, pp. 68-80.

Tally, Robert T., Jr., and Christine M. Battista. "Introduction: Ecocritical Geographies, Geocritical Ecologies, and the Spaces of Modernity." *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism: Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spatial Literary Studies*, edited by Robert T. Tally Jr. and Christine M. Battista, Palgrave Macmillan,

2016, pp. 1-15.

Tanner, Tony. *City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970*. Harper and Row, 1971.

Theado, Matt. *Understanding Jack Kerouac*. U of South Carolina P, 2000.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. Henry Holt, 1921.

Tytell, John. *Naked Angeles: Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs*. Ivan R. Dee, 1976.

Vanderwerken, David L. "Trout Fishing in America and the American Tradition." *Critique*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1974, pp. 32-40.

Viney, William. *Waste: A Philosophy of Things*. Bloomsbury, 2014.

Waldie, D. J. "Rereading, Misreading, and Redeeming the Golden State: Defining California through History." *A Companion to California History*, edited by William Deverell and David Igler, Wiley Blackwell, 2014, pp. 22-39.

Walker, Franklin. *A Literary History of Southern California*. U of California P, 1950.

---. *San Francisco's Literary Frontier*. U of Washington P, 1939.

Wall, Rosalind Sharpe. *Big Sur: A Wild Coast & Lonely*. Wide World, 1989.

White, Lynn, Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." *Science*, vol. 155, no. 3767, 1967, pp. 1203-7.

Wilson, Edmund. *The Boys in the Back Room: Notes on California Novels*. Colt, 1941.

Worster, Donald. *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*. Cambridge UP, 1995.

Wyatt, David. *The Fall into Eden: Landscape and Imagination in California*. Cambridge UP, 1986.

Young, Philip. *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration*. Pennsylvania State UP, 1952.

Yu, Su-lin. "Cynthia Kadohata." *Asian American Novelists: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Emmanuel S. Nelson, Greenwood, 2000, pp. 120-25.