

HOWLING ABOUT THE LAND: RELIGION, SOCIAL SPACE, AND WOLF
REINTRODUCTION IN THE SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES

By

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To Marcy, *sin miedo*.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Administrative component (of the Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project 5-year Review)
AGFD	Arizona Game and Fish Department
AMOC	Adaptive Management Oversight Committee
AMWG	Adaptive Management Work Group
ARC	AMOC Recommendations Component (of the Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project 5-year Review)
ARPCC	AMOC Responses to the Public Comment Component (of the Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project 5-year Review)
BRWRA	Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
Final Rule	The Mexican Wolf Final Rule authorizing the BRWRA reintroduction (50 Code of Federal Regulations 17.84(k))
FWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
IFT	Interagency Field Team
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MW	Mexican Wolf Blue Range Adaptive Management Oversight Committee and Interagency Field Team
MWEPA	Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area
NEP	Nonessential experimental
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NMDGF	New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
SEC	Socioeconomic Component (of the Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project 5-year Review)
SOP	Standard operating procedure

TC	Technical Component (of the Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project 5-year Review)
USBS	U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey
USC	U.S. Congress
USFS	U.S. Forest Service (USDA Forest Service)

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During the latter decades of the twentieth century, public perceptions of wolves in the United States shifted dramatically, making wolves the most recognizable wilderness icon in North America. This iconic status has not been without controversy. In the southwestern United States, the battles over who has the right to decide if, when, and where Mexican gray wolves (the most endangered subspecies of gray wolves) can be reintroduced have been especially contentious, particularly in terms of what constitutes appropriate land use and management. I investigated the iconographic significance of wolves, asked why wolves are a species of religious importance, and attended to the ways in which wolf reintroductions highlight deeply conflicting systems of value.

CHAPTER 1
MARKING TERRITORY: THE RELEVANCE OF WOLVES TO RELIGION

Prologue

Driving north on highway 191 along the eastern edge of rural Arizona, I passed into the town of St. Johns only to chance upon a Franciscan convent with an unusual pair of sculptures on the front porch. The building that housed the convent was a simple structure made of the clean white adobe stucco and wood that is common in northern Arizona and New Mexico. On opposite sides of the door that served as the convent's entrance stood a wolf and a human. More specifically, the wolf was the Wolf of Gubbio, and the human was St. Francis, with his tonsured hair and a bird resting on his forearm, clothed in the familiar monastic robe of his order.

The sculptures recall a story from the fourteenth-century hagiographical work *The Little Flowers* in which Francis rescued a city from the ravages of a wild wolf by forging a compact between the townsfolk and the wolf. The wolf was wreaking havoc on Gubbio, devouring both people and animals. Afraid to step outside the city walls, the people were in a panic. Francis took it upon himself to enter the "countryside" alone and confronted the wolf, saying, "Come hither, friar wolf. I command you in Christ's name that you do no harm to me or to any other," whereupon the wolf closed his gaping jaws and "gentle as a lamb" laid himself at the feet of Francis. Francis procured the promise of the wolf not to harm any other, and in return the wolf was to be fed regularly by the townspeople. Francis and the wolf even made the pact official by shaking hand-in-paw as a pledge of commitment.¹

Like many stories about saints or holy people in various religious traditions, this short narrative is undoubtedly intended to glorify the saint, to show his God-derived power over the

¹ For the full version of this story from the *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*, see Heywood (1998).

“wild” forces of nature, and to foreshadow the future peace of the kingdom of God. The story, in other words, is only peripherally about wolves. Yet there is something compelling about the symbolism of the story, for not just Francis but the townspeople are implicated in the pact. Their contract with “friar” wolf requires an ongoing exchange: in recognizing the wolf’s needs, a new relationship is created.

I wondered if the Franciscan sisters at the convent were aware of all the controversy about the real wolves who had been returned to the forests not too many miles away as part of the Mexican gray wolf reintroduction program. Having spoken with many people during my fieldwork about their work with wolves, their hopes for wolves, and their disdain for wolves, I found the sculptures offered a fitting metaphor for the many difficulties raised by the reintroduction of wolves to the Southwest. Francis and the wolf are separated from one another, and the wolf seemed to be eyeing him curiously, as if anticipating something. Perhaps he was wondering if the contract at Gubbio applies in Arizona?

Marking Territory: Why Religion?

“What do *wolves* have to do with religion?” is a question I have been asked frequently about the topic of my dissertation research. It is an understandable but also a telling question, for many people, including many scholars, still associate religion exclusively with human needs, desires, beliefs, actions, institutions, and communities. Due to the legacy of Western constructions of religious definitions, nonhuman animals, especially predator animals, have long been considered outside the ken of religious concern, or at most a subsidiary interest. If nonhuman animals received attention as a religious concern worthy of academic consideration, it

was typically by anthropologists who studied societies that were intimately aware of their dependence on animals for survival and whose religious systems reflected such dependence.²

The reason for the elision of nonhuman animals from serious consideration from scholars of religion undoubtedly has much to do with the historical origins of Western definitions of religion. These definitions were influenced by nineteenth-century Christian idioms of what counted as religion, even when the scholars themselves were not Christian or thought that Christianity was destined to be supplanted by science.³ While it is not necessary to recount in detail the scholarly debate of what counted as religion and what did not,⁴ what is important to note is that, at least for the most prominent streams of scholarly theory from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, religion was often considered synonymous with an intense *belief in non-material or supernatural beings*.⁵ Such criteria had political and social implications, at

² I refer here to anthropologists whose “subjects” were tribal societies. This may have, inadvertently or not, reinforced the feeling that “wild” animals only mattered religiously to “wild” people.

³ James Frazer (1854-1941) was particularly influential in this respect. Employing the categories of “magic,” “religion,” and “science,” Frazer posited an evolutionary advance in human cultures that was reflected in the explanatory power of these systems of thought. According to Frazer, the superiority of religious beliefs – despite magic and religion often being co-mingled – was found in their ability to account for the whims of the natural world by attributing these phenomena to capricious gods. Science, which did not appeal to the gods for its explanations, was seen by Frazer as a better system of rational thought, superseding its “predecessors.” The following passage is representative of Frazer’s line of argument: “Thus, if magic be deduced immediately from elementary processes of reasoning, and be, in fact, an error into which the mind falls almost spontaneously, while religion rests on conceptions which the merely animal intelligence can hardly be supposed to have yet attained to, it becomes probable that magic arose before religion in the evolution of our race, and that man essayed to bend nature to his wishes by the sheer force of spells and enchantments before he strove to coax and mollify a coy, capricious, or irascible deity by the soft insinuation of prayer and sacrifice”; and as Frazer later concludes, “In the last analysis magic, religion, and science are nothing but theories of thought; and as science has supplanted its predecessors, so it may hereafter be itself superseded by some more perfect hypothesis, perhaps by some totally different way of looking at the phenomena—of registering the shadows on the screen—of which we in this generation can form no idea. The advance of knowledge is an infinite progression towards a goal that for ever recedes” (Frazer 1922: 57b, 624b).

⁴ For summaries of such debates, see Taylor (2007: 9-15), Tweed (2006: 33-53), and Smith (1998: 269-284).

⁵ A figurehead in comparative anthropology, E.B. Tylor (1832-1917), for example, defined religion as “belief in spiritual beings” ([1871] 1920: 424). Psychologist William James (1842-1910) spoke about “individual men in their solitude ... as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine” ([1902] 1922: 31). Tylor’s definitional legacy continues in intellectualist and cognitively based definitions (those that rely on belief as a central term) among contemporary scholars as well; for example, Scott Atran’s (2002) definition of religion as comprised of “counterintuitive supernatural agents.” Mark Taylor (1998: 2) places the “interiorization

times acting as the standard of authenticity by which to judge how close non-European cultures came to having anything approximating (Christian) religion (see Chidester 1996; Masuzawa 2005).

Because nonhuman animals were peripheral to such definitions, they remained, religiously speaking, invisible to those concerned with “advanced” civilizations, in which, to put it crudely, lofty ideas involved lofty gods not earthy animals. There was, however, one way in which animals figured into the calculus of early academic attempts at definitions of religion. The late nineteenth century was a time when academic categories were further clarified – the scientific study of religion among these – and it was also a period of time when scholars were heavily influenced by the metaphorical parallels between the development of societal complexity and the phylogeny of animal species.

In this respect, the impact of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859) upon the labors of nineteenth-century religious historians and comparativists cannot be underestimated. This seminal work provided a scientifically respected framework from which to theorize about the roots of religious experience. The evolutionary differences between animal species (popularly conceived through the metaphor of a ladder) came to be considered analogous to the evolution of religious beliefs from a single, primal religion.⁶ As Eric J. Sharpe noted, at this point in history, “The West became obsessively historical, bent on drawing its parallels and painting its morals on the largest of all canvases, that of the evolution of the world, and within the world of mankind

of religion” as having its genesis with “Luther’s turn to the individual self,” thereby underscoring the influence of Protestantism’s subjective commitment to salvation through personal faith in particular, and Western constructions of religion more generally that were influenced by this conception.

⁶ For an excellent overview of the search in comparative religious studies for the origins of religious belief, and the ways in which this was influenced by evolutionary theory, see Sharpe (1986). On the ladder metaphor of height (unlike, say, the metaphor of a strawberry plant) as applied to evolutionary theory, and what she convincingly argues are its misappropriations in social Darwinism and sociobiology, see Midgley ([1978] 1995: 145-164; 2002: 33-39).

[sic]" (1986: 25). The "evolution" of religion, ironically, meant that animals, as sacred sources of meaning or divinized companions acted as confirmation of "lower" religious development.⁷

Though nonhuman animals may have been treated as a subsidiary interest by early scholars of religion (who believed that attributions of divine or spiritual power to animals represented mistaken religious apprehensions), nonhuman animals attracted increasing attention as critical to religious and social solidarity, especially from anthropologists, from the mid-twentieth century onward (see, for example, Levi-Strauss 1963; Douglas [1966] 2002; Rappaport 1979; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996; Ingold 2000). Among anthropologists, the import of nonhuman animals to religious systems, however, still tended to be confined to tribal or small-scale societies, only occasionally drawing critical reflection in relation to "modern" or "world" religions.

This has been a difficult academic legacy to countermand. Particularly in the late twentieth century, the increasing globalization of religion fostered exposure and contact with peoples of various religious allegiances and served to expose to serious critique overbroad assumptions about divinity, the importance of belief above practice, and the identification of religion with institutions, among other definitional conventions.⁸ Scholars of religion now typically understand religious definitions to be provisional, culturally constituted, and plural – helpful tools for framing research questions rather than definitive means of exposing the

⁷ For Darwin's own account of religion as comparable to the mistaken attribution of life to inanimate objects, which he supported with observations of his dog, see Darwin ([1871] 1981: 65-69, esp. 67). On developmentalist models of religious theory, see Patton (2006: 32); on early psychological theory in relation to animals, and the particular influence of Piaget ([1923] 2002) and Freud (1950), see Melson (2001; cf. Midgley 1983: 118-124); on the dismissal of "animism" as a "primal" religious understanding on which more "advanced" religions are purportedly to be built, see Harvey (2006: 3-16) and Chidester (2005b).

⁸ Because most scholarly religious education prior to the 1960s tended to be located within divinity schools, Protestant paradigms and frames of comparison dominated the study of "non-Western" religions. Mark Taylor underscored two fateful developments that untethered religious studies from Protestant paradigms: U.S. Supreme Court decisions that allowed teaching *about* religion instead of teaching religion in public schools, and multicultural and countercultural sensibilities that challenged Eurocentrism (1998: 10-11). Taylor noted, "As attention shifted from a more or less exclusive focus on Western religion to a broader range of religious beliefs and practices, it quickly became apparent that it was imperative to rethink not only *which* religions were to be investigated but *how* they were to be studied" (1998: 12).

inadequacies of some religions in comparison to others.⁹ Religion is also increasingly evaluated by many scholars according to what it *does*, its active role in meaningfully orienting people toward the sacred and one another, rather than by some unchanging standard or “essence.”¹⁰

One aspect of this broader approach to analyzing the power and function of religion was to re-open the door to the inclusion of nonhuman animals, bringing back into focus the importance of how human identity is shaped by interaction with other animals – among all peoples, not just so-called “primitive” societies or Eastern cultures.¹¹ In the field of religious studies, only in the last few decades of the twentieth century did a body of scholarship develop to address questions regarding nonhuman animals.¹² Paul Waldau, who has contributed to this growing field of study, called this scholarly attention “the renewal of an ancient inquiry” since “nonhuman life-forms have, from ancient times, had a remarkable presence in religious beliefs, practices, images, and ethics ... [and] have served as fellow travelers, communal society members and workers, and, often, intermediaries between the physical world and the supernatural realm” (2005: 356). Indeed, this is welcome and needed scholarly inquiry, for religion is deeply implicated in how

⁹ For an overview of the ways that such pluralism has impacted religious studies texts, see Russell McCutcheon’s (2007) review on the proliferation of edited volumes dealing with religious terminology.

¹⁰ I am informed here by historian of religion Robert Orsi and others who have placed a premium on the study of *lived religion*. Due to the influence of theological studies, until the 1970s, texts were central to religious studies (especially historical studies), but several scholars – prior to the coining of the term “lived religion” – pioneered work that analyzed the meanings people create through their everyday gestures, conversation, ritual participation, and household organization. These studies sought not to abandon texts but to show how they were intertwined with other religious imaginings and practices. “Religion,” according to Orsi, “is always religion-in-action, religion-in-relationships between people, between the way the world is and the way people imagine or want it to be” (2002: xx). For a collection of scholarly approaches that rely on *lived religion* as an organizing concept, see Hall (1997).

¹¹ In the early 1990s, a subfield of the social sciences, *animal studies*, began to develop and attempt to move discussion about animals outside the province of anthropologists, who, according to Steve Baker, continued to focus their attention on societies and cultures other than their own (Baker 2001: xxxii, xxxv, 6-7). In part, this move is consistent with a larger project of cultural examination and reflexivity inspired by post-structuralism and postmodern theory. One of the contributions of animal studies, in my view, is that it rejects wholesale distinctions between “us” (our culture) and “them” (other people’s cultures) in favor of highlighting the taken-for-granted assumptions that may be operative in many cultures, including those closest to home.

¹² See, for example, Birch and Cobb (1981), Regan (1983), McDaniel (1989), Chapple (1993), Linzey (1995), Linzey and Yamamoto (1998), Webb (1998), Waldau (2002), Foltz (2006), Waldau and Patton (2006).

humans interact with the nonhuman, not just with disembodied beings and forces but with the living organisms that occupy and move through our common geographies. Religion, even if it is considered an exclusively *human* way to construct and re-construct worlds of meaning, constantly directs attention to other-than-human beings and forces. Indeed, some scholars have argued that the notion of being “human” is only possible in relation to the nonhuman (see, for example, Shepard 1996b, Abram 1996, and Berry 2006). When scholars ignore or bracket out nonhuman animals as less than worthy subjects of religious concern, they unduly close off vast areas of human experience that impinge on the way in which people understand and enact their religious commitments.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in the relationships between religion and animals, a lacuna remains. Thus far this laudable scholarly work has primarily focused on domestic (or “companion”) animals; justice-related issues (e.g., factory farming, animal welfare, vegetarianism); or animal intelligence (e.g., cetacean and primate spirituality, and the moral implications of sentience and/or rationality among nonhuman animals). Much less religious analysis has been done on issues that involve human relationships with predator species, the ethical implications of managing non-domestic animals, and religious perceptions of these “wild others.”¹³ My research on human relationships with wolves is an attempt to begin filling this gap.

¹³ I am writing here of the discipline of religious studies. Clearly, other scholars have analyzed such connections from within their own disciplinary purviews, such as the fields of anthropology, human ecology, history, and environmental ethics, which I note in other chapters. I surmise that the focus, thus far, of religious studies reflects a preference for studying animals that are: 1) closer in physical proximity to most scholars (domestic/companion animals) to which many people have intimate emotional attachments; 2) “innocent” subjects of profound and systematic, if often unrecognized, human abuses, for which there is a feeling of ethical urgency; and 3) “smart” animals, or those that are felt to most closely approximate humans in their cognitive capacities. In the same way that ecotheologians have focused on the harmonious aspects (or hoped-for harmony) of the natural world, while eliding the more chaotic or violent aspects of evolution (see Sideris 2002), it seems that so far scholars of religion share an aversion to addressing why “violent” predator animals might be religiously significant. This hesitancy may reflect a deeply human-centered, albeit benevolent, ethical extensionism, and an unwillingness to take seriously

Marking Territory: Why Wolves?

Wolves offer a particularly powerful lens to explore the relevance of nonhuman animals to broader religious perceptions and narratives, especially in the United States, for the passions that are aroused by the presence of wolves have been embedded within contestations over what constitutes the “proper” relationship of North Americans to the lands they inhabit. The ways in which people think about and act toward wolves thus reflects particular views of the world, ideas about how humans fit in the world, and how humans ought to relate to others.

For some people, the religious importance of wolves is apparent. The question asked at the beginning of this chapter (i.e., “What do wolves have to do with religion?”), in other words, would appear strange because of the seeming transparency of the answers. Throughout human history, wolves have captured the religious imagination. For some cultures, wolves have been deities; for others, demonic forces. Wolves have been considered spiritual helpers but also spiritual foes. The quality of the relationships between wolves and humans is in many ways dependent upon how wolves are perceived, within both the human imagination and in the actual landscape. These two realms have very blurred borders, for how humans act toward wolves within the geographical landscape is directly related to the way in which wolves are understood in human mental landscapes. I explore those relationships through particular historical and geographical lenses, focusing primarily on the southwestern United States, which has been rife with controversy about wolf reintroductions; but presently, a few examples can illustrate the varied ways wolves have been viewed as a species of religious significance.

For societies that depended on coordinated hunting as a means of subsistence, the social similarities between wolves and humans was often reflected positively through oral narratives

those animals that may trouble notions of a “peaceable kingdom.” As is detailed later, it is not the first time that wolves have been at the back of the line in questions of moral consideration.

that described the manner in which wolves aided hunters, religious specialists, and warriors in times of need. In North America, native Americans participated in a diversity of relationships with wolves. Wolves served in some cases as social models or totems for specific clan groupings, and, in this respect, the Skidi Pawnee are perhaps best remembered for their social correspondences with wolves.¹⁴ Other plains-based tribes, such as the Tonkawa and the Cheyenne, ritually re-enacted oral narratives through elaborate dances that explained their origins as hunting peoples, expressed their cultural dependence on wolves, and were intended to ensure productive hunts. Origin myths of the Paiute, Cree, Blackfoot, and Arikara recall how the wolf helped to form the earth itself. For indigenous peoples in northwestern North America, such as the Nootka, Kwakiutl, and Quillayuk, wolf “people” played a special role in initiation ceremonies that served to ritually incorporate young people as members of their respective societies.¹⁵

Wolves have been an object of reverence and even worship for other cultures around the world. Ancient gods like the Greek huntress Artemis or the Teutonic war-god Odin had powerful wolf companions. Romans were said to be descended from twin boys nursed by a she-wolf. Likewise, in Inner Eurasia, the Türks and the Mongols believed themselves to be descended from a wolf. In Egypt, the wolf- or jackal-headed god Wapawanet led Egyptian

¹⁴ Among Amerindian plains tribes (and early European traders), Pawnees were well known for their associations with wolves (see Grambo 2006: 29, 31-32, 98-99; Lopez [1978] 2004: 111-113), including their “wolf scouts,” which were warriors who sometimes camouflaged themselves in wolf skins, and were said to have the acute hearing, eyesight, and tracking abilities of wolves. In Pawnee cosmogony, wolves were linked to the “Wolf Star” (Sirius), which was believed to guard the “primal female presence” (Lopez [1978] 2004: 102); for an account of the origin story of the Pawnee and their relationship to the wolf star, see Feher-Elston (2004: 7-9).

¹⁵ For commentary on the relationships between Native Americans and wolves, see Hampton (1997: 30-61), Lopez ([1978] 2004: 77-144); and Fritts *et al.* (2003). For anthropological works on wolf-related rituals and hunting practices, see Ernst (1952), for Northwestern native societies; Schlesier (1987), for the Cheyenne; and Nelson (1983), for the Koyukon peoples of Alaska. For a collection of Native American stories in which wolves are primary actors that is written for a popular readership, see Feher-Elston (2004); and for a collection of more contemporary essays on wolves by Amerindians, see McIntyre (1995: 253-288).

armies into battle and as the “opener of ways” was responsible for guiding the souls of the dead. Permeable lines were also sometimes believed to exist between deities and wolves themselves, as in the case of the shape-shifting sun god Apollo (the patron of shepherds), who took the form of a wolf in some Greek legends, signaling perhaps the dual capacities of the gods to protect and destroy in Hellenistic culture.¹⁶

Though agriculturally based societies have typically had ambivalent relationships with wolves, the worship of wolves in Japan was widespread among mountain farmers up until the nineteenth century. The wolf was known as the “Large-Mouthed Pure God” and, when properly treated, was believed to protect the people’s crops from the ravages of wild boars and deer. The power of wolves could also be harnessed in talismans and charms that served to protect their wearers from disease and infertility, among other misfortunes. The Ainu, an indigenous Japanese tribe, believed themselves to be descended from wolves, which were worshipped as their divine ancestors.¹⁷

Wolves were often represented in oppositional ways by pastoral (herding) communities that depended upon domesticated livestock for their livelihood. In such a context, wolves have been labeled in negative terms – thieves, varmints, villains – or attributed preternatural powers. The Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), for example, arose in a predominantly pastoral context, and in these traditions wolves were typically metaphors of destruction or deception (for biblical examples, see Gen 49.27; Jer 5.6; Matt 7.15, 10.16; John 10.12; Acts 20.29). According to comparative religionist Kimberley Patton, “It is true the Abrahamic traditions do not centralize animals in their constructions of truth or Law, but neither

¹⁶ In addition to Lopez ([1978] 2004) and Grambo (2005), who note some of the facets of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Norse wolf legends, see Baldick (2000) for the importance of wolves in the ancient religions of central Asia.

¹⁷ For a historical treatment of wolves in Japan, see Walker (2005).

do they peripheralize them ethically, devotionally, or in the religious imagination” (Patton 2006a: 34). Even when pastoral economies and lifeways were left behind, wolves’ metaphorical roles as sources of pollution or agents of evil persisted as a way of categorizing spiritual and physical threats.

This outsider status was reinforced during the Middle Ages in Europe, especially in popular bestiaries (books that assigned specific human characteristics, such as greed or valor, to various animals) in which wolves were depicted as symbols of humankind’s baser instincts. At times, wolves were even associated directly with Satan, and persons who were deranged or who committed criminal acts were sometimes burned at the stake for their “wolfish” crimes. One of the most enduring pieces of literature in the Western world, Dante Alighieri’s *The Divine Comedy*, populated the eighth circle of Hell with those who committed the “sins of the wolf.”¹⁸

In the United States, much has been written about the Puritan encounter with the “howling” wilderness of New England, a place that, seen through the lens of biblical typology, offered these early seventeenth-century religious reformers an opportunity to start fresh by redeeming the wilderness through cultivation. For most of the early settlers in America, wolves figured predominantly as treacherous actors on a divine stage, interfering with cattle that were allowed to roam free outside of colonial settlements. Economic interests often mixed with biblical injunctions to “protect the flock,” and wolf bounties were enacted to fulfill a dual

¹⁸ For wolves and their role in bestiaries, see Kienzle (2006) and Baxter (1998). For other general comments about wolf symbolism, including the reference to Dante, see Lopez ([1978] 2004: 203-277; cf. Rowland 1973: 161-167), and Woodward (1979). For examples of crimes thought to be inspired or associated with lycanthropy, see Otten (1986).

purpose: secure economic prosperity and spiritual catharsis on the land by clearing it of unwanted threats.¹⁹

Despite early calls for animal protection and conservation in the late nineteenth century, *predator animals* remained ensconced in the category of the unworthy. Wolves in particular represented the epitome of the “bad” animal, a quintessential “varmint” with neither sporting manners nor moral qualms about their “violent” acts.²⁰ One Colorado newspaper cautioned that if nothing were done to quell wolves’ eating habits, the plains were likely to revert back to their former condition, “a howling wilderness with a vengeance” (in Robinson 2005a: 35). As it had in New England, the violation of property propriety made wolves a despised villain and their howls a reminder of what humans had yet to subdue.

While early colonists relied largely on biblical metaphors to justify wolf killing, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, there were additional ideological claims added to such providential sources. Wolf hunter Ben Corbin reasoned in his book *Corbin’s Advice or the Wolf Hunter’s Guide* (1900), “I can not believe that Providence intended that these rich lands ... should forever be monopolized by wild beasts and savage men. I believe in the survival of the fittest. ... The wolf is the enemy of civilization, and I want to exterminate him” ([1900] 1995: 123-24). This blend of social Darwinism, racism, and manifest destiny combined to form a

¹⁹ For excellent descriptions of aurally inspired fears of the “howling” wilderness see Nash (2001 [1967]: 16, 26, 32, 36, 62-63); also, for Puritan ambivalence about wilderness and New World typologies, see Albanese (1990: 35-40). For more positive representations of Puritan views about wilderness, see Gatta (2005: 15-48).

²⁰ The Boone and Crockett Club, for example, was founded in 1887 by Theodore Roosevelt and others to promote honorable hunting practices and preserve the lands that hosted game animals that were of interest to hunters. John J. Audubon led the charge in bird preservation, and the Audubon Society, founded in his honor, became an influential organization in public policy. William T. Hornaday was another influential and tireless early twentieth-century wildlife advocate and scientist. He served as director of the New York Zoological Park, founded the American Bison Society, and authored several books that promoted his ideas regarding wildlife protection, including *Our Vanishing Wildlife* (1913). For these high-minded men, wolves were still a nuisance at best and a scourge in need of eradication at worst. Hornaday’s comments can be taken as representative: “Of all the creatures in North America, none are more despicable than wolves”; they are “insatiable in appetite, a master of cunning and the acme of cruelty” and as a “four-footed fiend ... [w]herever found, the proper course with a wild gray wolf is to kill it as quickly as possible” (1904: 140-142).

powerful brew of hubris that bled from the imagination onto the landscape, where wolves (and native communities) were targeted for the perceived affront they posed to American economic progress. Wolf deaths were often gruesome affairs: wolves were roped and then dragged behind horses, they were poisoned and suffered prolonged death throes from strychnine, they were hamstrung by hunters and farmers who then used trained dogs to tear them apart, they were lured into swallowing meaty baits with hooks inside of them, and whole litters of their pups were “dennded.”²¹

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the symbolic status of wolves underwent a substantial shift in North America, and even worldwide. Wolves now grace the publications and websites of numerous environmental advocacy groups, and the proliferation of wolf images in the media often indicates an empathetic stance toward what was once an object of derision. Even the howls that were once considered portents of death and evil are assuming new associations, and listening for wolf howls with park rangers has become a popular nighttime tourist activity at several Canadian national parks and wolf education facilities in the United States. Preeminent wolf biologist L. David Mech remarked that since the wolf had come to symbolize disappearing wilderness, “the creature now symbolizes [all] endangered species and has become the cause célèbre of numerous animal-interest groups,” which has resulted in “wolf deification” (1995: 271). This “deification” does not have the same connotations as it formerly did in the Japanese or Egyptian context, but it does signal a growing appreciation for wolves, and even a religious and moral concern for them.

²¹ Denning refers to physically digging out the site used for rearing pups in order to destroy this younger generation before they had a chance to become more elusive. For details about the wolf-killing methods noted in this paragraph and their historical precedents, see Young and Goldman (1944: 286-368) and Brown (2002: 31-108). For an interpretation of why such methods were used, see Lopez ([1978] 2004).

Though current economic and social configurations in the United States may not easily facilitate the same sort of intimate awareness of wolves that was formerly more prevalent, people continue to deploy religious language to capture their deep emotional bonds with wolves. Especially in the context of gray wolf reintroductions in North America, which began in Yellowstone and Idaho in 1995, and were followed by the reintroduction of Mexican gray wolves to the Southwest in 1998, religious rhetoric is frequently used to capture the sense that wolf recovery may signal a rapprochement between humans and nature. As Hal Clifford, executive editor of *Orion* magazine, expressed it,

This is the renaissance of the land. The wolf sings it into being. The wolf is all the connections of the land, and that includes our connection, too. As we make room for the wolf we take another step toward embracing the complexity of the world – the glorious, magical complexity that is the expression of God in all things – and we begin to stitch ourselves into the fabric of place (Clifford 2005: 194).

Wolves have clearly been symbolically powerful in various ways throughout human history, and they continue to be for many people. If it is accurate that “religion has often been the primary source for answers to questions such as, ‘Which living beings really should matter to me and my community?’” (Waldau and Patton 2006: 14), then there is much to gain from paying close attention to these relationships, not the least of which is the potential to expand the definitional horizons of religious studies to include not only nonhuman animals with which humans share their homes but those with which humans co-exist in the larger ecological landscape. Understanding values about communities, about local landscapes, and about nonhuman animals as *religious* values also may help explain why the debate about the place of wolves in North America has been fraught with tension; and possibly point to more successful ways of remediating wolf-related conflicts.

Marking Territory: A Working Definition of Religion (in relation to nonhuman beings)

Like all categories that broadly define the territory of academic inquiry, religion has been a slippery term, and its content subject to changing emphases over time. According to J.Z. Smith (1998: 281), definitions of religion are convenient inventions that provide a necessary “disciplinary horizon” for scholars to analyze and compare disparate phenomena.²² Yet defining religion in a satisfying way is a challenging task. On the one hand, even when scholars are cautious and aware of personal and cultural biases, they are always in danger of excluding certain actions as non-religious as they mark the territory of what should be considered religious; on the other hand, scholars are also in danger of creating definitions that are so elastic that they fail to adequately capture why something may or may not be considered religious.

Simply because religion is a contested term, with competing definitions delimiting the terrain of scholarship, however, does not mean that it should be discarded. The very ambiguity of religious definitions, Bron Taylor argued, should be viewed positively, in that “by messing around, even playfully, with inherited terms and understandings ... valuable insights will be gained” (2007: 13), which can lead to further refinements.²³ Indeed, as long as one realizes the provisional qualities of definitions, the term *religion* can be very useful as an analytic tool,

²² Smith provocatively argued that religion “is not a native term” but “a second-order, generic concept that plays the same role in establishing a disciplinary horizon that a concept such as ‘language’ plays in linguistics or ‘culture’ plays in anthropology” (Smith 1998: 281). Smith’s understanding of the term *religion*, therefore, is that it is imposed by scholars upon divergent practices and experiences for the purposes of comparison and generalization (see Smith, in Taylor 1998: 7-8). One could quibble with Smith over his claim that scholars are responsible for setting the terms of the debate, for *religion* has also been a term that is strategically deployed by non-academics to authenticate or inauthenticate what is considered religion (i.e., superstition, cults, etc.). Furthermore, as Benson Saler (1999: ix, 21-22) noted, *religion* is used in common “folk” idioms that shape the way all people understand religion and which influences the trajectories of defining it – even that strange and select population of people who accept the vocational label of *academics*. Chidester made a similar claim when he wrote “that the very term *religion*, including its definition, application, and extension, does not, in fact, belong solely to academics but is constantly at stake in the interchanges of cultural discourses and practices” (2005: 36).

²³ Taylor lists a bevy (sixteen in all) of “family resemblances” that suggest the wide definitional terrain religion can encompass. The concept of “family resemblances” is Wittgenstein’s ([1953] 1973). Saler (1993) also builds upon this concept to offer a mature synthesis and critique of various definitions of religions, while submitting his own “prototype theory.”

helping to spotlight what people consider worthy of their time and energy, and how they create and maintain worlds of meaning.

David Chidester, one of the most lucid contemporary religion theorists, calls such provisional definitions “working definitions” to indicate that they are framing devices for marking one’s primary categories of interest and analysis. Chidester, for his part, summed up his working definition of religion as a “generic term” for “ways of being a human person in a human place” (2005a: vii),²⁴ though he elaborated this deceptively simple “generic” definition with an entire paragraph of qualifications, including: “discourses and practices that negotiate what it is to be a human person both in relation to the superhuman and in relation to whatever might be treated as subhuman”; “discourses and practices for creating sacred space”; and an activity that “inevitably involves dehumanization and exclusion” (vii-viii).

I would like to highlight some items in Chidester’s definition that I find productive, and which have influenced my own working definition of religion in my research on human-wolf relationships. In his working definition, Chidester began by locating religion in what would seem to be an exclusively human realm: “being a human person in a human place.” If he had not elaborated on this compact definition, it would have seemed as though his working definition of religion had little to say about the nonhuman. He did not stop there, however, and several key words followed: negotiate, superhuman, subhuman, practices, creating, sacred, space, dehumanization, and exclusion (cf. Chidester 2005a: 18). Two features of religious practice emerge from this list of terms that are worth further emphasis.

²⁴ Chidester’s work has been particularly valuable to me, both generally in the way that he has opened up new territories to chart the flows of religion in popular culture and more specifically in his focus on spatial practices being critical to religious identity, as exemplified in *American Sacred Space* (1995), which he co-edited with Edward Linenthal.

One, religion is actively engaged with nonhuman beings and forces. When people practice religion, they negotiate what it means to be human in a more-than-human world.²⁵ According to Chidester, religion, as a way of being a human person, necessarily involves dealing with *both* what is considered superhuman and what may be considered subhuman. It can be argued that, due to “classic” Western definitions of religion, divine beings or the “supernatural” have received inordinate emphasis to the exclusion of those beings and/or forces that are construed as superhuman or subhuman. Attending to the ways in which people actively locate themselves and negotiate with reference to these categories of being (superhuman and subhuman) can offer a broader understanding of how religion functions.

The second notable item from Chidester’s expanded definition is that defining what is human through religious practices does not merely involve *affirming* what is *included* within a community. The other side of the coin of inclusion is the exclusion (sometimes through dehumanization) of others. In other words, a religious community defines itself by who it claims is important *and* by who it claims is not important; by who it acknowledges as participants worthy of religious attention and by who it claims as unworthy of religious attention.

²⁵ The term “more-than-human world,” was coined by David Abram (1996) as a way of designating the lateral, intersubjective relationships that humans share with other earthen beings and forces, especially nonhuman animals. Employing a phenomenological approach (and a sometimes very personal narrative) to the study of religion, Abram argued that humans are “tuned for relationship” by the body’s senses, and that we are dependent on the more-than-human world for our sense of identity: “The simple premise of this book is that we are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human” (Abram 1996: ix). Especially important to his critique was his examination of oral cultures, which he argued demonstrate a greater receptivity, and therefore adaptability, to their environments. He contrasted this type of sensual embeddedness to textual cultures (with roots in religions that depend on written alphabets), which have abstracted language from the bodily field. Abram has had an influence on what Graham Harvey (2006) called the “new animism,” which is premised on recognizing personhood and developing relationships with nonhuman “persons” and which I address more fully in chapter two. In addition to Harvey, who more often relies on Irving Hallowell’s phrase “other-than-human persons,” ethologist Marc Bekoff (2002), ethicist William Lynn (2004), and religionists John Grim (2006) and Mary Evelyn Tucker (2006) are among those who have used “more-than-human” to underscore notions of interdependence and multiple intelligences among animals. For my purposes here, I mean only to highlight that religion involves much more than human activities and ideas, and need not exclusively involve relationships with beings that are believed to transcend the earth.

The reason this is significant, in my view, is that religious practice functions as a way of marking and reinforcing boundaries – ideological, ontological, and geographical – providing them with ultimate meaning and emotional resonance.²⁶ This is not typically a private matter. In other words, religious boundaries (who counts as “in”, and who remains “out”) are enacted, performed, and concretized through physical and external demonstrations of communal values and collectively held narratives. Such markers identify *what is human, what is not, what types of beings appear to cross these boundaries, and why it matters*. In human relationships with nonhuman animals, religious practice may serve to reinforce kinship relations and concomitant ethical obligations with specific species or individual animals. Religious practices may also, inasmuch as they indicate what is outside the realm of sacred consideration, reinforce the unworthiness or the “object” status of certain or all animals.

This is especially evident in contemporary contestations over wolf reintroductions, which are embedded within competing ideas about proper land use and management. Oppositional views about wolf reintroductions can be generalized in the form of a question: Is land, *all* land, first and foremost for human use (and what cultural and religious identities inform this view) or are humans morally obligated to co-exist, inasmuch as this is possible, with species that compete with them for space and resources? Answers to such questions are more than theoretical. They are worked out on the ground through “spatial practices.”²⁷

²⁶ My understanding of the active role religion plays in constructing boundary markers is informed here by Chidester and Linenthal’s discussion of the “situational sacred,” as opposed to substantive definitions of the sacred deployed by Mircea Eliade, Rudolph Otto, and Gerardus van der Leeuw. Chidester and Linenthal argued that the sacred is “a sign of difference that can be assigned to virtually anything through the human labor of consecration. As a situational term, the sacred is nothing more nor less than a notional supplement to the ongoing cultural work of sacralizing space, time, persons, and social relations. Situational, relational, and frequently, if not inherently, contested, the sacred is a by-product of this work of sacralization” (1995: 5).

²⁷ The term is from Chidester’s and Linenthal’s introduction to *American Sacred Space* (1995: 1). Chidester and Linenthal highlight particularly how such spatial practices are involved in contested claims and counter-claims over sacred space: “a sacred space is not merely discovered, or founded, or constructed; it is claimed, owned, and operated by people advancing specific interests” (1995: 15), and therefore “sacred space anchors more than merely

As one example of the ways in which wolf reintroduction areas remain contested areas, revealing the importance of wolves as symbolic placeholders of the sacred and the profane, consider the seemingly innocuous signage placed in various campgrounds – adjacent to admonitions to put campfires out after use and “keep your forest clean” by not littering – that instruct visitors how to behave if they chance to see a Mexican gray wolf (*see Fig 1-1*). These signs, in addition to providing information about wolf behavior, their endangered status, and offering phone numbers in case of a sighting, display the following reminder: “You are now in Wolf Country.” In 2007, members of the Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team were directed to change the wording on these signs due to the complaints of some aggravated residents in Greenlee County, Arizona, who objected to the connotations of the signs’ territorial claims.²⁸ One may be tempted to ask why a few signs mattered so much to some people. I offer this as an example of competing claims made about wolves and the territories they inhabit. By placing signage in areas where wolves might be spotted, federal and state government agencies were, even if unintentionally, claiming these spaces as different from “ordinary” space – a difference that required heightened awareness and additional knowledge in order to prevent potential conflicts between campers and wolves. But at stake for those who objected to the signs was the authentic ownership of these forest lands.²⁹ For them, the recovery area was not “Wolf

myth or emotion. It anchors relations of meaning and power that are at stake in the formation of a larger social reality” (1995: 17). Claiming space through “spatial practices” has been a major piece of wolf reintroductions, and is deeply involved in contests to define a “larger social reality.”

²⁸ Shawna Nelson, the Arizona Game and Fish Department outreach coordinator for the Interagency Field Team, informed me of this directive by email on 2 August 2007 and elaborated on its relevance by telephone on 9 January 2008. In her view, spending time replacing these signs was a frivolous use of agency resources, since doing so was unlikely to assuage the deeper antipathies of those who objected to the signs’ wording.

²⁹ It is worth noting that similar signs about other large predators, such as black bears and mountain lions, have not evoked similar ire in the region. In addition to the heightened political controversy of wolves – for which the signs serve as visceral reminders – this difference is probably attributable to wolves being reintroduced, whereas black bears and mountain lion populations were never extirpated. The act of recovering wolves is thus more easily viewed as an unwelcome governmental intrusion.

Country,” and the suggestion that it might be was offensive.³⁰ In contrast, for those who view wolves as representative of the “wholeness” or “harmony” of the natural world, such signs might be understood as signaling the reclamation of sacred territory, a restoration not merely of wolves but of nature’s “wildness.”³¹

Presently, I would like to offer my own signage and mark my definitional territory, so to speak. My working definition of religion frames my analytic concerns about the relationships between humans and wolves, and it can be summarized as follows:

Religion involves mytho-pragmatic negotiations with “others” (human, suprahuman, and subhuman) that creates and reinforces identity markers with emotional resonance and ultimate significance.³²

³⁰ In a public meeting hosted by the Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Work Group (the AMWG is a collective comprised of lead federal and state agencies responsible for wolf recovery as well as county government agencies impacted by wolf recovery), one attendant questioned the logic in changing the signs’ wording, asking, “What kind of ‘country’ are you going to call it?” The response to this question, though vague, did demonstrate the AMWG’s desire to communicate effectively, and peripherally brought up the issue of conflicting values: “We are not sure, but calling it ‘wolf country’ offends some folks who value it much more for other reasons. We are concerned that if they are offended by the big print, they might not read the rest of the sign as carefully as we would like them to. The point is, we need to reach people, not distance them, so we can provide information that will enable them to cope with and/or enjoy the real or possible presence of wolves throughout the BRWRA [Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area]. So, we are looking for ways to communicate messages more clearly – if we can improve the signs, we will” (AMWG 2007: 6).

³¹ See, for example, Rick Bass’s prologue to *The Wolf Almanac* (Busch 1998), in which he emphasized that it was not wolves that needed saving but “wolf country” (1998: xi), something he viewed as a “moral crisis.” Sandy Bahr, a Sierra Club member and the conservation outreach director for its Grand Canyon chapter, was the first person to call the controversy over these signs to my attention. As an advocate of wolf recovery, she objected to what she saw as counterproductive political capitulation to the interests of a select few: “The fact that the Fish and Wildlife Service and Game and Fish are willing to bend on that – that’s part of the problem. You know that old saying, ‘You give [th]em an inch they’ll take a mile’? I think until there’s some point where the agencies go, ‘No, wait a minute, we’re going to have to work this whole thing out – you need to accept that you know the wolves are gonna be here, and we understand they’re creating some issues for you, let’s work out those issues.’ I think they need to say, ‘Enough is enough. We’re not gonna go out and gun for wolves or demonize them.’ We’ve certainly had enough of that” (interview, 20 July 2007, Phoenix, AZ).

³² By “mytho-pragmatic” I mean to underscore the interrelation between “myth” (valued narratives, often cosmogonic, which are sometimes unarticulated cultural background assumptions [see Orsi 2002: xxi]), and its performance; that is, myths are enacted (ritualized) through social codes and laws, through formal rituals, but most importantly perhaps through daily life, as people make and remake worlds of meaning. I chose the word “negotiations” because it signals well the transactive, mutually informing character of relationships that are believed to occur between humans and other beings (human, suprahuman, subhuman); it also signals the ongoing, dynamic process of these relational transactions.

Religion, in other words, is comprised of ideologically charged acts that mark human territory, and, as a corollary, who is kept in or out of that territory. Religious narratives, reinforced by practice, inform “us” what is (or should be) within our sphere of moral concern, as well as what should be excluded.

This “working definition” is not all-encompassing, though it aims to be inclusive of practices that I see as germane to how people negotiate meaning with respect to other animals. It is certainly not intended to draw hard and fast lines around what religion *is*, but rather to set forth the spaces of inquiry to which I am attending.³³ To this end, I believe that this loose but active definition can 1) bring forth important facets of religion that have been obscured by definitions that exclude nonhuman animals, and 2) draw attention to the kinds of negotiations that are part and parcel of religion’s orienting characteristics (where do we fit? where do others fit? how should we live? how do we live with others? where are we going? how do we get there?).

The tripartite categorization of beings (human, suprahuman, and subhuman) is not meant to imply that nonhuman animals are synonymous with the subhuman. Nonhuman animals, depending on the cultural tradition and its particular religious expressions, may be considered one or all of these categories. Indeed, the contextual location of a nonhuman animal may lead a person to discern personhood in such a being at some times and not at others; or, the nonhuman animal(s) may be perceived as crossing back and forth between these different states of being, at special times or generally.

By “identity markers” I mean to include not only the embodied act of marking individual bodies, domestic spaces, and geographic terrain, but how these markers are critical to understandings of human identity (what “we” are, which can be construed as the *ontological dimension*; where “we” are, which can be construed as the *locative dimension*; and where “we” are going, which can be construed as the *teleological dimension*) (cf. Tweed 2006: 74).

Lastly, “emotional resonance” and “ultimate significance” are ways of highlighting similar things in two slightly different keys. Religions “label, prescribe, and cultivate some emotions and obscure, condemn, and redirect others,” Tweed reminds us (2006: 70). Religion provides ways to direct and channel affective intensities that endow the ways people mark, claim, and map their worlds with ultimate significance.

My focus, which clearly shapes my working definition of religion, is on what religion does – and more to the point, I have tried to indicate how religion is in play and at work in non-institutional contexts and spaces. This may have led to a working definition that some would find too elastic, blurring the line between religion and other social forms (as some scholars argue about Paul Tillich; see Tweed 2006: 77, Saler 2000: 24, 87-121), though I have attempted to indicate the relative difference of religion in its negotiation with the “suprahuman” (whether this is conceived of as divine beings or completely material forces upon which humans depend) and in its dealings with “ultimate” matters (markers that are thought to be of greatest importance and which strongly define ethical commitments).

³³ Thomas Tweed comments that “The term *religion* has not failed us when we decide it obscures some features we want to highlight,” but rather “It has directed our attention to practices that we might otherwise have missed. It has prompted future conversation, more contestation. It has done its work. We know something we did not know” (2006: 41).

In addition to Chidester's work, my understanding of religion as a process of orientation (both ideologically and geographically), and as a boundary-creating exercise that actively *locates* and *negotiates* human communities in relation to wolves, is indebted to Thomas Tweed's explication of religion as a spatial practice of "crossing" and "dwelling." "Religions," Tweed asserted, "involve finding one's place and moving through space," which is an ongoing exercise of orientation that positions "women and men in natural terrain and social space" (2006: 74). Tweed nicely summarizes the way in which religion informs the locative identity of adherents: "you are this and you belong here" (2006: 74-75). Religion, in other words, is a negotiation – through space, with others, across boundaries – but it is a negotiation with the aim of orientation.³⁴ Religion orients people by marking their identities, their social spaces, and their geographies with reference to what they hold to be of ultimate significance.

While Tweed relied on aquatic metaphors ("confluences," "transfluvial currents," cultural "eddies," organic-cultural "flows," etc.) to capture the dynamic quality of religion's spatial practices and movement, I place more emphasis on the ways in which religion builds, cuts, marks, defines, segregates, sharpens, serializes, or attempts to reify boundaries. I agree with Tweed that religion prompts crossings – to imagined homelands, through different life stages, to cosmic realms – and riparian metaphors illustrate well these types of "flows." However, I am also interested in the channels of identity that religion cuts as it flows through the landscape, and what happens when nonhuman animals "jump across the current" and confront these ideologies with their physical presence. Perhaps Tweed's yin complements the more yang-focused metaphors I deploy; both sets of metaphors are interested in movement and highlight processes,

³⁴ Tweed (2006: 74, 80-81, 85ff) credited Charles Long's definition of *religion as orientation* as critical to his own, and he further explicated this "orientation" trope by appealing to religion's metaphorical function as both watch (orientation in time) and compass (orientation in space).

but I also underscore the (temporary) cessation of movement – what happens when people attempt to divide, dam, or impound humans and nonhumans in the category of the “outsider” or “other.”³⁵

One important aspect of Tweed’s discussion of religion, and which his aquatic metaphors capture elegantly, is how religion intermingles with other “transfluvial currents,” such as economic forces, social relations, and political interests, with often surprising “flows” as results (2006: 60). Religious views, values, and practices are entangled with a host of economic, environmental, and historical factors. It may well be that “religious traditions have had a major role in passing along basic ideas about [animals’] place in, or exclusion from, our communities of concern” (Waldau and Patton 2006: 15), but during my research I have often been led to broader cultural discourses that may intersect with yet remain beyond explicitly identifiable religious traditions. Analyzing the religious importance of wolves, as an animal that has framed the way people advertise their sense of human emplacement in the natural world, has challenged me to consider the ways in which nonhuman animals function religiously in contexts not typically considered religious – such as within political debates, among environmental groups, in the production of economic goods and services, in educational curriculum, on the Internet, and, of course, within the natural world itself. The work that religion does, as a mythological and pragmatic negotiation with “others,” invariably intersects with such cultural “currents,” shaping and re-shaping the lands through which humans (and wolves) move.

Marking Territory: The Topography of the Religious Imagination

To better understand and assess the root causes of conflicts about wolves, I focus on three overlapping themes: 1) the interplay of geography and religious ideology in the symbolic

³⁵ Tweed does focus on the ways in which religion “constrains” terrestrial and corporeal crossings, but does so with reference to human individuals and communities. I expand these constraints as critical not just for humans but for nonhuman animals.

relationship between wolves and wilderness; 2) the overlaps between the religious imagination and material culture in wolf iconography; and 3) the conflicting values which inform the social, political, and ecological boundaries that have shaped the survival of wolves. All three themes are present throughout the various chapters that follow, but below I note the places where they are each particularly prominent.

The first theme is the interplay between geography and ideology. The symbolic correlation of wolves with wilderness has rendered them powerful representatives and inheritors of negative and positive discourses about the relationship of Americans to the “wild.” In roughly the first four hundred years of European settlement in the United States, wolves were frequently associated with wilderness, and their plaintive howls only added to their symbolic potency. During the twentieth century, wolves continued to be associated with wilderness but a new set of values began to intrude upon the old, altering the associations that were attached to wilderness and bestowing a positive value upon both uncultivated lands and the undomesticated creatures that were believed to best represent these lands. A nostalgia for things lost and a new ecological value for landscapes with a full complement of species increasingly began to find expression in post-World War II America.

In chapters two and three, I examine the constellation of symbolic associations attributed to wolves/wilderness, and how these associations fueled efforts to eradicate wolves, and, more recently, provided motivation to restore them to their historic habitats. In these chapters, I emphasize that the spaces which wolves roam are not merely geographical; they also move through the cognitive maps of human consciousness, including the religious imagination. In various ways, people have attempted to corral or harness the perceived powers of wolves as a way to condemn or express their sense of human “wildness,” and to order the world according to their visions of what constitutes “good” and “bad” animals.

The second theme builds upon the first by exploring the ways wolves have been portrayed in various forms of material and visual culture. Particularly in chapter three (which is broader in historical scope) and six (which is focused on the Southwest), I examine the utilization of wolves as an animal “other” that has been used to define humans and their communities in relation to the natural world. The proliferation of advocacy groups, websites, news stories, mailings, magazines, and other publications devoted to wolves have made them the most recognizable wilderness *icon* in North America. Analogous to the way a religious icon focuses a devotee’s attention, aiding the viewer in contemplating something beyond the icon itself, so too have wolves become an icon for many persons, representing much more than a species in danger of extinction within its historic range. By examining these iconographic associations, it is possible to better appreciate the function of animal icons as powerful tools for constructing and reinforcing moral and geographic boundaries.

The third theme explores the historical ways in which various groups of Americans, including the federal government, have actually reconfigured the landscape – along with its biota – in an attempt to exclude wolves from or include wolves within regional communities. This work has contemporary urgency, as state and federal government agencies must now consider how to manage an endangered species within a context of conflicting public opinion and competing and often incompatible moral values. This theme is most prominent in chapters four, five, and six, in which I look more closely at the conflicting values that are expressed about land in the Southwest and what kinds of boundary-related issues are most critical for Mexican gray wolf reintroduction and recovery.

Throughout the chapters, I argue that wolf eradication and reintroduction can be regarded as a set of tangible efforts to inscribe conflicting values on the American landscape – a way of ordering the land to reflect conflicting visions of human relationships to the natural world. In the

United States, the presence of wolves often delineated between the “civilized” (i.e., domesticated animals and settled lands) and the “wild” (i.e., nondomesticated animals and relatively uninhabited lands), and fewer wolves was taken as a sign of economic and moral progress. Now, it is increasingly the case that more wolves (not fewer) are believed to signify moral progress, a sign of humans coming to terms with animals in a non-dominionistic manner, and even a recognition of the intrinsic worth of animals that were once despised as useless or evil.

While wolves were not the only predator animal targeted for extermination in the United States, unlike most of their non-domestic animal kin, in many places wolves were unable to survive the “control” efforts of government agents. When public attitudes in the United States began to change, influenced by those such as forester and wildlife ecologist Aldo Leopold and his ecological-ethical synthesis, wolves became the chief ambassador for a conservation ethic as well as a potent symbol for what had been lost. The debates about wolf reintroduction highlight that various claims about wolves are also value-laden claims about how human should relate to the natural world. Looking at religion through the lens of human-wolf interactions casts a broader light on how humans construct, deconstruct, and re-construct morally significant geographic spaces; how homes and homelands are made and marked; and whether and in what ways people view themselves as part of or separate from a broader organic community.

Marking Territory: Interdisciplinary Mutants

My research and analysis of human relationships with wolves has much to do with geographical, ideological, and religious boundaries, as these intersect, overlap, and regulate (surveil and patrol) the spaces Americans assign to wolves and humans. I am not, however, the first to notice or connect environmental history, ecological science, and religion as important components for understanding human-wolf relations. Some writers – the most prominent and cogent among them being author Barry Lopez ([1978] 2004), historian Thomas Dunlap (1988),

wildlife biologist Bruce Hampton (1997), political scientist Martin Nie (2003), and historian John Coleman (2004) – have explicitly addressed the multiple symbolic and pragmatic relationships that humans have had with wolves in the United States. In his book, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (2004), Coleman labeled his work as that of an “interdisciplinary mutant” (2004: xi). I understand my own work similarly.

My research attempts to hold several concerns together in a creative tension: 1) the need for the field of religious studies to attend to animals as sites and agents of religious importance; 2) the importance of religion, particularly in establishing relational boundaries between various human and animal communities, and its relevance to other fields such as animal studies, environmental philosophy, political science, sociology, cultural geography, and environmental history; and 3) the influence of the religious imagination on territorial claims, including the physical changes wrought by these imaginings on the spaces humans share with other animals.

I am particularly hopeful that focusing on wolves and the values attributed to them may broaden how we think about the impacts of animal agency on religious constructions. It is perhaps apparent that people are not, or at least should not be, passive “objects” for study.³⁶ It is perhaps less evident, for those of us who are inheritors of dominant Western cultural presuppositions regarding deep ontological fissures between humans and nonhumans, that nonhuman animals are also not passive objects of study. Wolves challenge the boundaries we create – whether these boundaries are imaginary lines on a map, the ideological divisions between humans and other animals, or the very real boundaries created by barbed wire, roads, poison, and gunshot. Wolves continue to move across the physical borders of human-created

³⁶ Among others, Merchant (1983) and Plumwood (1993) have argued this point forcefully, particularly highlighting the influence of Enlightenment science on subject/object, nature/culture, women/men, emotional/rational dualities.

geographies as well as the less apparent but perhaps more potent imaginative borders created by the human mind.

My study of people's relationships with wolves has led down some exciting roads, but like any territory one walks, there is no way to cover it all or one method for doing so. Tweed reminds his readers that "Theorists are neither omnivagant nor omnispersive. They wander only to this place, or that; they see only what the vantage allows" (2006: 15).³⁷ In my physical wandering in the southwestern United States, speaking to many persons who work closely with wolves or are directly impacted by their reintroduction, and in my imaginary wanderings through stacks of books, articles, websites, and sundry material artifacts, this particular and partial perspective is clear. I have not visited all the interesting places, or said all the interesting things that could be said, about wolves and humans. My academic training, primarily informed by my exposure to the field of religious studies, also constrained where I looked and what I have looked for in my research. I therefore view this work as a starting point for an ongoing dialogue between those of many different persuasions, academic or otherwise. Other scholars and "interdisciplinary mutants," I hope, will choose to explore different geographical regions – or the same location with another set of lenses and questions to ask.

Wolves, adaptive and social mammals, once roamed throughout what is now the United States in numbers that some people today would find staggering, probably some 400,000 in all.³⁸ By the 1920s, outside of portions of Mexico, Alaska, Canada, and the fringes of the states that

³⁷ I also abide by Tweed's admonition that scholars take a "locative approach" to their own work (2006: 16), which he explains is the frank acknowledgment that theories offer "positioned representations of a changing terrain by an itinerant cartographer" that should be "internally coherent and contextually useful" and persuasive enough that they are "found plausible by any fair and self-conscious interpreter who engaged in the same sort of research practices" (2006: 17).

³⁸ Estimates are variable, ranging from Ernest Thompson Seton's guess of two million to later estimates as low as one-hundred forty thousand, but one of the best educated guesses I have seen is Hampton's (1997: 22, note 13).

border Canada, wolf populations had been reduced to fragmented packs and solitary survivors, eking out an existence by dodging the guns, traps, and poisons of the federal government. By the 1940s, even most of these “outlaws” had been “brought to justice.” Their bodies were gone – shot, scalped, hung from fences, drawn and quartered, poisoned and left to die out in the remote rangelands – but wolves nevertheless remained in a manner of speaking, for the trauma of such deaths marked them symbolically. Their near-extinction in the continental United States lent them an iconic power that later made their restoration a matter not merely of ecological wisdom but, for some, an act of atonement.

By examining the historical, religious, and environmental contexts that made such different meanings possible, better perspective can be gained on the ways in which people continue to utilize other animals, especially large predator animals like wolves, to express their sense of place in nature. Wolf reintroductions are a public “test” of these conflicting values, and the successes and failures of these reintroductions speak to the ways in which religion, as an active, affective way to construct and interact with landscapes, informs human understandings of self, community, and the larger world. Until the middle of the twentieth century, wolves were an icon that united many people in the United States in a way that led to their destruction; my research investigates if, as one of the more visible and dramatic cases of species eradication, wolves may now become an animal that brings people together to reflect upon the future of their local communities, including the biotic community as a whole.

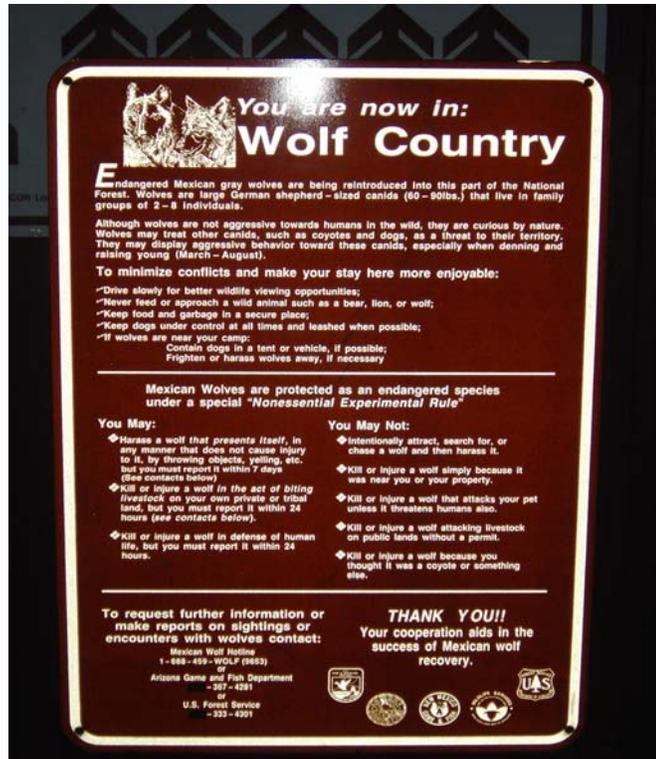


Figure 1-1. "Wolf Country" signage in Upper Blue Campground, Apache National Forest, Arizona. (Photograph by Gavin Van Horn)

CHAPTER 2
ANIMISTIC RELATIONALITY, THE GOOD SHEPHERD, AND THE CONTEST OF
ANIMAL ORDERS

What we did, as humans, because we had to get rid of the wolf upset everything that God had planned. Well, to me, God and Mother Nature are the same thing. It's all one as far as I'm concerned. Whatever you want to call it, I think it all works together. I'm not a pagan, so I don't pray to Mother Nature, but, I mean, to me it's all one.¹

Two separate gatherings, with two very different purposes, took place the morning of January 26, 1998, in Alpine, Arizona. One group of people waited for Bruce Babbitt, the Secretary of the Interior of the United States, to speak about the historic moment that was unfolding. Nearby in a horse trailer, three wolves also waited within their steel crates. They would later be released to their acclimation pens about five miles from Alpine. “There’s room and space enough in God’s creation that we can all live in harmony on this landscape,” said Babbitt to the eager gatherers.² Meanwhile, in the center of Alpine, a group of thirty protesters gathered to express their discontent about the reintroduction. David Robart, an Arizona goat rancher, summarized some of their misgivings: “We believe [that wolves] are a ploy or a tool to limit our access to public lands. ...Wolf lovers worship the created, not the Creator. We believe the wolf was created by God and wasn’t intended to be set aside and worshiped in a pagan manner. They [supporters of wolf reintroduction] hold wolves in higher esteem than their fellow man” (Robart, in Miniclier 1998).

There is an abiding tension in debates about wolves not often addressed by those who rightly point to wolf reintroductions as “not really being about wolves.” I explore some of the issues that are “not really” about wolves – such as ideological divisions between the rural poor

¹ Bobbie Holaday, interview, 12 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ. Holaday was the founder of Preserve Arizona’s Wolves (P.A.WS.), a non-profit citizen’s organization that organized support for and dialogue about Mexican wolf reintroduction. She was present at the initial release ceremony.

² For a more detailed version of this event, see Holaday (2003: 121-128).

and the urban elite, fears of federal mismanagement, private versus public uses of land, and economic concerns – in subsequent chapters. However, the “nut” of the matter – as retired U.S. Forest Service officer Don Hoffman called it – is not often named, much less examined. This “nut” is rooted in a clash of worldviews, in which people worry that the needs of other animals (in this case, wolves) are being elevated above the needs of humans. Hoffman has attended his share of public meetings about wolf reintroduction, and he expressed some frustration over their objectives to me.³ From his perspective, public forums about Mexican wolves were rarely conducive to constructive dialogue; they were rather venues to air grievances, with the same familiar faces usually present to repeat similar complaints. One thing Hoffman recognized, however, was how quickly the core offenses were articulated in such meetings:

[Y]ou can walk into a room, the meeting will start, and within thirty seconds people will be right there at the nut. They will have cracked right to the nut of the issue that bugs them... Those people [ranchers] are literally *offended* that we would spend money or alter our way of living in any way for some animal. Of course, the wolf brings that out even more than that because it's an animal that they look at as their enemy or archrival. To see society shifting and putting money and time and governmental resources into restoring wolves just is offensive to them. The fact that [wolves] were something that was removed at their command ... and the fact that we are now restoring them, I think symbolizes their total loss of control over how the world operates. ... And another group with the government behind them is saying, “We messed up using your philosophy and your value system.” ... Their core values are not only being challenged; they are being pushed to the side for another set of values, which is just incredibly painful to them (interview, 11 July 2007, Alpine, Arizona).

³ Beginning in 1991, pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the draft Environmental Impact Statement for Mexican gray wolf reintroduction was reviewed at four public scoping meetings conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), with a total attendance of 838 people (FWS 1996: ii). In addition, according to the final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), the FWS held 14 public open house meetings (total registered attendance was 1,186), 3 formal public hearings (Austin, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona; and Socorro, New Mexico), and almost 18,000 people or organizations offered oral and/or written comments about the proposed reintroduction (FWS 1996: ii, 5.82-5.83). The Arizona Game and Fish Department held similar, though less formal, public meetings in Arizona throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s (see chapter four). Hoffman was also referring to subsequent public scoping meetings that have been conducted for other critical phases in the reintroduction process, such as the five-year review (MW 2005), and open house meetings to suggest revisions to the program in 2007 (FWS 2007b).

Hoffman’s description of core values “being pushed to the side” highlights a critical aspect of why wolf reintroductions have been so controversial. Wolf reintroduction strikes deeper chords than fears of economic losses, personal safety, or community security, though these are certainly important issues; reintroducing wolves unearths a clash of narratives about human relationships to the natural world that, I argue, has religious foundations.

I will return later in this chapter to the idea of wolf “worship” as a form of paganism, but presently, it will be helpful to explore in more detail variant “animal orders” that are informed by religious understandings and social lifeways. By “animal orders,” I mean the inherited, learned, and actively constructed divisions and correspondences that are understood as defining humans in distinction from and in relation to nonhuman animals – particularly how these divisions and correspondences order the world in meaningful ways. The historic contestation over wolves in the North American context, the most recent manifestation being their federal reintroduction, has also been a contest over the values attributed to nonhuman animals, and particularly larger predator animals like wolves. Local conflicts are thus embedded within a wider social, environmental, and religious history: namely, the erosion and potential overturning of an “animal order” that has held sway in the United States since European colonists first brought their domesticated animals to American shores.

Wolves as Insiders: Animistic Relationality

As a species cognitively equipped for symbolic thought, humans have long looked to other animals for their behavioral cues, adapting and adopting various nonhuman animals as social symbols, models, or companions. Historically, many small-scale, indigenous cultures lived in a

world believed to be diffuse with spiritual power, wherein particular animals were considered “people” able to impart practical wisdom to humans.⁴

For cultures such as these, a strong emphasis on the permeable boundaries between human and nonhuman animals was and is common. Within such religious lifeways, and in geographical locations where such relationships were appropriate, wolves frequently were perceived as having a special kinship relationship to humans. In many ways, wolves’ high degree of sociality makes them a likely candidate for special attention: to name just a few characteristics, wolves have elaborate systems of communication; they are socialized and learn valuable skills through play; they coordinate their movements and hunts to accomplish goals that could not be accomplished in isolation; they interact in ways that increase intragroup bonding while regulating distances between other wolf populations; breeding adults form strong pair bonds; and they spend extended periods of time caring for their young (Young and Goldman 1944; Mech 1991; Mech and Boitiani 2003b).

Indeed, the social parallels between humans and wolves have received some attention,⁵ and the domestication of wolves – unlike less socially adapted species – was likely enabled by a high

⁴ Some scholars and popular writers have pointed to the dawning of the Neolithic Age (10 kya) as a critical juncture in human history, a period in which large-scale agriculture and resultant sedentary populations created radically different socio-religious configurations among humans (and nonhumans), with a corresponding change in the symbolic importance of nonhuman animals (e.g., Snyder 1990, Oelschlaeger 1991, Hughes 1994, Eisenberg 1998, Diamond 1999, Quinn 2005; cf. Merchant 2003 who traces the popular Western theological and historical narrative of a “fall” from Eden-like or supposed paradisiacal conditions). Human ecologist Paul Shepard (1996b, 1998) who perhaps made the most forcible arguments in this respect, suggested that the human genome was optimally adapted to thousands of years of hunting and gathering and that the relatively recent advent of agricultural enterprises created socially and psychologically unfavorable (or unsuitable) conditions, including a disruption between humans and nonhumans manifested in critical losses of biodiversity.

⁵ According to Hall and Sharp (1978b), in distinction from gorillas, chimpanzees, and orangutans – the primates to which humans are typically compared because of intelligence and shared physiological traits – early human behavior and sociality was not shaped by the forest environment as much as it was by the savannah, offering intriguing behavioral parallels between human and wolf “cultures.” Unlike vegetarian primates (chimpanzees providing an important exception), hunting territories and food sharing among wolves offers more proximate models for the practices of hunter-gatherers, including division of labor, exploration of larger land bases, and social behaviors (1978b: 4-5). Hall and Sharp also advanced the idea that “culture” (communicating symbolic information about one’s environment through a learned system of behavior; and social transmission of these behaviors in a population

overlap of comprehensible interspecies behaviors (see Fox 1978; Midgley [1978] 1995: 25-28, 51-55; Packard 2003; Fritts *et al.* 2003). As ethologist Michael Fox commented, “the canid hunters provide many intriguing social and ecological analogs to early man [sic] – more than are provided by any other living animals” (1978: 29). Though the degree of solidarity between humans and wolves was contextually variable, dependent on the historical and geographical relationships between the species, humans and wolves often shared similar ecological habitats, and it is likely that this shared space as well as the sociality and charisma of wolves led many persons to recognize them as animals of significant spiritual power.⁶

Kinship relations, based on physical proximity and mythic importance (the two often being related), between humans and non-humans were and remain important for many Amerindian peoples. Spiritual power could be given or withheld by animals, and was believed to be dependent on individual and corporate rituals that ensured proper respect toward particular animals.⁷ Among such indigenous cultures, communal and individual identity was further formed through what anthropologist Nurit Bird-David (1999) has referred to as a “relational epistemology.” In contrast to the Cartesian formula, “I think, therefore I am,” Bird-David argued that a relational epistemology, which is characteristic of hunter-gatherer animism, is formulated as “I relate, therefore I am” and “I know as I relate” (1999: 78). Particular relationships were

over time in a way that defines a group) is not exclusive to humans, and there “is no reason, other than our own self-valuation, to assume that these differences are qualitative” (Hall and Sharp 1978a: 10). See also Schaller and Lowther (1969).

⁶ For various examples of wolf behaviors that were imitated by humans during hunting, see Lopez ([1978] 2004: 77-101); see also Grambo (2005: 69, 72-76, 128, 137). Fox, building on the work of John Pfeiffer (1969), observed that prehistoric hunters shared similar population densities and territorial hunting ranges with wolves, as well as social regulations to regulate carrying capacity (1978: 26-27). For general comments on various human cultures’ relationships to wolves, see also Fritts *et al.* (2003). On wolf territoriality, see Mech and Boitani (2003a).

⁷ In addition to the references listed in chap.1, n. 15, see Martin (1978); Pierotti and Wildcat (1999); Berkes (1999): 79-126; Harrod (2000); Callicott and Nelson (2003); and Grim (2006).

thus based on a “mutual responsiveness,” which could grow into “mutual responsibility” (1999: 77).

For Native societies who held wolves in high regard for their hunting skills, wolves played key roles within such an epistemological framework. For example, the Cheyenne (Tsistsistas), according to anthropologist Karl Schlesier,

fashioned themselves after animals of their choosing [sic], or rather, after animals that had chosen them. The person who was selected by wolves, for example, became a wolf without changing physical form, although some could do so according to Tsistsistas experiences. He or she certainly dreamed wolf dreams, possessed wolf skills and power, acted like a wolf, immersed himself or herself in wolf lore, talked with wolves, hunted with wolves, was taught by wolves, protected wolves, painted himself or herself as a wolf, and wore wolf *omotome* [immortal gift of breath that was believed to remain in those body parts that deteriorated slowly, e.g., teeth, claws] on his or her body and in a bundle. Here the border between a human and a wolf had been cracked in the physical world (1987: 12).⁸

This “crack” between wolves and humans suggests animistic relationships in which Cheyenne knew who they were – that is, gained a sense of identity – because they knew who wolves were in relation to themselves and other creatures. In opposition to theories that would confine animistic lifeways to mistaken anthropomorphic projections, Bird-David writes that in conversation with other beings, “We do not first personify other entities and then socialize with them, but personify them *as, when and because* we socialize with them” (1999: 78). Such seems to be the case among the Cheyennes and other Amerindian peoples who, because of their extensive social relationships with wolves, identified them as persons with whom they had mutual responsibilities.

⁸ European traders and explorers did not encounter Cheyennes until the seventeenth century in Minnesota. Tsistsistas was the name used by the Cheyennes at this time, and this is also the name that Schlesier uses throughout his book (despite the book’s title, which may have been an editorial decision), in part to distinguish modern Cheyennes from their forbearers (1987, xi). For the sake of clarity, I will only use the term *Tsistsistas* when directly drawing from Schlesier’s work.

Understanding Animism

The term “animism,” like many other religious terms, including *religion*, has a checkered history. If used at all, it is often offered as an example of the patronizing Eurocentrism of famous anthropologists of days gone by.⁹ However, other scholars have been less willing to discard it, for reasons discussed below, and the term has recently experienced a revival. According to Graham Harvey, animism “now labels a type of religion comparable to other types,” and is “helpful in drawing attention to ontologies and epistemologies in which life is encountered in a wide community of persons only some of whom are human” (2005: 81). The sophisticated ethnographies of scholars who have reclaimed the term underscore its usefulness in highlighting socio-religious relationships in a way that other “isms” (e.g., theism, secularism, polytheism) do not.¹⁰

Harvey, in particular, has led this reclamation, and further expounds on the animistic conception of “personhood” in his book *Animism* (2006). For Harvey, animism (or the “new animism”¹¹) can do service as a critical, academic term for calling attention to both animist cultures and those who behave as animists in cultures that would not be aptly labeled animistic. Like Bird-David’s explanation of “relational epistemologies,” at the core of Harvey’s definition

⁹ The older usage of the term is almost synonymous with the work of E.B. Tylor, who used “animism” as a label for cultures who (erroneously, according to Tylor) believed that nonhuman entities contained an animating soul or divinity. In other words, it was a religious system built on a fundamental error of misattribution, though Tylor allowed that such cultures (“savage philosophers”) were doing the best they could with the explanatory tools they had available to them (see Tylor [1871] 1920). For a critical assessment of the term and its abusive applications, see Chidester (2005).

¹⁰ In addition to Bird-David (1999), see, in particular, Descola and Pálsson (1996); the themed issue on animism of *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* (2006); and Tiedje and Snodgrass (2008). Some scholars have opted for the term “sacred ecology” instead of animism as a way of describing such relationships (see Harrod 2000, Berkes 1999).

¹¹ Harvey distinguished the “old animism” – a belief in spirits and/or a confusion about the borders between life and death – from the “new animism,” which he defined as “a concern with knowing how to behave appropriately towards persons, not all of whom are human” and is “a self-designation among some indigenous and nature-venerating religionists, many of whom are well aware that it can carry negative associations but reject these in favour of its more positive associations” (2006: 3; cf. p.16).

of animism is how persons seek to relate to the world in respectful ways. Animists, according to Harvey, recognize a world full of “other-than-human persons,” that is, beings and intelligences that need not be human to qualify as deserving or demanding human respect.¹² The goal of animists, in a world of various agents, is to learn how to behave appropriately and respectfully towards these persons.

All is not resolved by pronouncing a term analytically helpful, but, in my view, Harvey’s careful treatment of animism is valuable because it calls attention to underexplored areas of religion in which nonhuman animals comprise a larger community that humans must learn to negotiate with respect. This is important because “modernist Western culture,” as Harvey calls it, has often treated other animals not as persons but as “things,” useful for their benefits to humans, perhaps, but not worthy of serious attention as beings that may communicate with or critique human cultures or persons.

The dominant cultural narratives in North America have frequently assumed a firm distinction, even a gulf of ontological separation, between the human and the nonhuman.¹³ The “otherness” of animals has typically been seen as a sign of their inferiority; difference has been understood as signaling lesser worth. In contrast, animist worldviews and practices open up questions largely untouched by such dualistic understandings; as Harvey noted, “If every ‘thing’

¹² The term “other-than-human” persons was coined by anthropologist Irving Hallowell (for the variation “more-than-human” persons, see Abram 1996; chap. 1, n. 25). The idea of “personhood” may strike some readers as odd since it is not equated with humanness. “Persons,” as Harvey defined it, is the broader umbrella for those beings who are perceived as displaying agency (and this encompasses landscapes, rocks, etc., in addition to nonhuman animals). Thus, Harvey asserted, “Persons are beings, rather than objects, who are animated and social towards others (even if they are not always sociable). Animism *may* involve learning how to recognize who is a person and what is not – because it is not always obvious and not all animists agree that everything that exists is alive or personal. However, animism is more accurately understood as being concerned with learning how to be a good person in respectful relationships with other persons” (Harvey 2006: xi). Moreover, “Persons are those with whom other persons interact with varying degrees of reciprocity. Persons may be spoken *with*. Objects, by contrast, are usually spoken *about*. Persons are volitional, relational, cultural and social beings. They demonstrate intentionality and agency with varying degrees of autonomy and freedom” (xvii).

¹³ For a valuable overview of both religious and secular claims to human uniqueness, see Peterson (2001).

we humans encounter might in fact be a living person, the implications and ramifications are immense. It is this that generates the particular etiquettes, protocols and dialogues that are at the heart of the lived realities that are animisms” (2006: xiv).¹⁴ In short, animisms foster a constant dialogue between humans and nonhuman persons, a kind of social, spiritual, and ecological “conversation” that is continuously negotiated, or what Philippe Descola and Gísli Pálsson labeled a “sociocosmic community, subjected to the same rules as humans” (1996: 14).

Relating Particularly

However, animism implies more than simple, egalitarian, harmonious relations among humans and nonhumans. At times, literature about Native Americans reflects a compensatory bias toward romanticizing indigenous spiritualities, flattening out differences between peoples and cultures.¹⁵ This is perhaps most noticeable in New Age appropriations of Native spiritual practices, but among the wider public the “ecological Indian” remains a prevalent stereotype.¹⁶

¹⁴ For a valuable discussion of the ways in which “environmental etiquette” and ethical principles are learned through respectful relationality, similar in its content to Harvey’s explication of animism, see Cheney and Weston (1999). Nabhan (1995) also offers an excellent set of reflections on how such cultural relations with other nonhumans are learned over time and through an intimacy with place.

¹⁵ This has been further complicated by the rising popularity in North America and Europe of neo-shamanism, which draws upon indigenous “universal” shamanistic techniques, predominantly for individually tailored therapeutic purposes (Atkinson 1992, Jakobsen 1999, Hamayon 2001, von Stuckrad 2005, York 2005, Harvey 2006: 142-144). Since the seventeenth century, when the word shaman (*saman*) was first used to refer to religious specialists in northern Siberia among the Tungus, it has undergone several incarnations, gaining layers of meaning as ethnographic data accumulates. A predominant feature in ethnographic literature seems to be that it is consistently easier to find a shaman than it is to define shamanism. Particularly when applied to Native Americans, both contemporarily and historically, the term shamanism can serve to obfuscate rather than clarify socio-religious practices because of its various usages in anthropological literature, and its popular appropriations outside of anthropology (see Atkinson 1992, Hamayon 2001, Klein *et al.* 2002).

¹⁶ For a historical evaluation and assessment of the “ecological Indian” trope, see Krech (1999). Other sources that are helpful for understanding contestations about Native American religion by New Age practitioners include Catherine Albanese’s description of New Age “Native American consciousness” within her overall evaluation of various syncretic “nature religions” (1990: 153-163); Adrian Ivakhiv’s (2001) detailed account of New Age practice as it relates “power spots” like Sedona, Arizona; and Bron Taylor’s (1997) evaluation of the influences, ritual borrowings, alliances, and contestations of Native American appropriations among radical environmentalists, who have often had uneasy relationships with New Agers. For critiques of New Age appropriations, as well as various forms of “playing Indian,” see Green (1988) and Deloria (1998). For a summary of various arguments about the “ecological Indian” and an attempt to draw out problematic framings in this “debate,” see Nadasdy (2005).

Contrary to such oversimplifications, animistic religions are decidedly complex, and their *contextual particularities* produce variable relationships with other-than-human persons and different classificatory systems of these persons' relative importance.

Anthropologist Irving Hallowell's conversation with an Ojibwe man provides a classic example of the importance of particular relations in animistic religion. Aware that rocks were animate nouns grammatically in the Ojibwe language, Hallowell asked his conversation partner if all the stones that they saw around them were alive. After thinking about this for a period of time, the man responded, "No! But some are."¹⁷ Similarly, wolves are not universally regarded as important to all native societies, and individual wolves may have been considered "more alive" than others based on the interactions between particular groups/individuals.

Indeed, depending on the context, wolves may have been regarded as "persons" to avoid. The quality of social-spiritual relationships between wolves and Native Americans was perhaps inevitably topographically dependent. Lopez suggested that the vast landscapes of the Plains or the arctic tundra may have been conducive to mutual regard, but "Those who tended to fear the wolf the most were the woodland Indians, who encountered them suddenly, usually at close quarters ... [and] the nether regions of many tribes' spirit worlds were inhabited by wolves which, in this context, were enemies" (Lopez [1978] 2004: 123). Parallel fears are evident among indigenous pastoral societies, such as the reindeer-herding Saami peoples of Sweden, who view wolves as a physical and spiritual threat since they attack the reindeer that the Saami depend on for their livelihood (Lindquist 2001).¹⁸

¹⁷ For this story and a discussion of Ojibwe linguistic features, see Harvey (2006: 33-49). The original description of the interaction is found in Hallowell (1960). In addition to Harvey, see Albanese (1990: 20), Bird-David (1999), Grim (2006), Snodgrass and Tiedje (2008).

¹⁸ Cultural changes due to Christian missionization also attenuated or led to different attitudes toward wolves. See, for example, Pavlik ([2000] 2005), which discusses the impacts of Puebloan and Christian views on Navajo beliefs about witchcraft and wolves. For an example of how Christianized Indians in the colonial era deployed wolf

As these examples indicate, persons in an animistic worldview are not necessarily friendly or sociable toward humans. “Far from naïve,” Harvey argued, “Animists engage (responsively or proactively) with the real world in which, if they are correct, people must eat other persons, may be in conflict with other persons, will encounter death, and will need to balance the demands made by a series of more-or-less intimate and/or more-or-less hostile relationships” (2006: xx). Fears of predation among some indigenous cultures likely inspired cosmologies with a correspondingly greater emphasis on predator-prey relationships between human and nonhuman persons.¹⁹

The point is this: context matters. In an animistic culture, relationships – and cosmologies – reflect values that are established and tested by long-term interactions. Sacrality is a qualitative condition of those interactions. As communal hunters, it is not surprising that wolves were typically held in high regard (even as social models) among hunting cultures that were in close proximity to them. Barry Lopez described some of these relationships between wolves and indigenous hunters when he wrote,

The caribou-hunting tactics of wolves in the Brooks Range and those of the Nunamiut *were* similar. ... Wolves and Cree Indians in Alberta maneuvered buffalo out onto lake ice, where the big animals lost their footing and were more easily killed. Pueblo Indians and wolves in Arizona ran deer to exhaustion, though it might have taken the Pueblos a day to do it. Wolf and Shoshoni Indian lay flat on the prairie grass of Wyoming and slowly waved – the one its tail, the other a strip of hide – to attract curious but elusive antelope close enough to kill. ... That wolves and Neolithic hunting people in North America resembled each other as predators was not the result of conscious imitation. It was convergent evolution, the most successful way for meat eaters to live. Conscious

metaphors to “other” their enemies, see Coleman’s account of “praying Indians” (Algonquins who lived close to Boston), who used wolf metaphors to describe their persecution by Mohawk Indians from the north (2004: 43-45). Coleman also provides a valuable treatment of wolf tributes, which were one way in which seventeenth-century Native Americans and colonial settlers “communicated,” attempting to settle differences through the mediation of dead wolves, though these meanings ultimately faltered on differing interpretations (2004: 53, 62-65).

¹⁹ This is borne out particularly well in studies of South American indigenes, such as Tukanoan speaking groups of the northwest Amazon, by anthropologists like Reichel-Dolmatoff (1975, 1996). For discussions of the possible range of animic systems, including “predatory animism,” which is relevant here, see Descola (1996: 89-91, 94-95); also, Arhem (1996) and Wilbert (2004).

identification with the wolf, on the other hand, especially among Indians on the Great Plains, was a mystical experience based on a penetrating perception of the wolf's lifeway, its gestalt. And it could, on occasion, become conscious imitation ([1978] 2004: 99, 101).

It is worth looking more closely at how some peoples have related particularly with wolves, and how these relationships necessarily changed over time as physical proximity became a memory rather than an immediate reality. The relationships between Cheyennes and wolves provide an important example of animistic relational epistemologies. High regard among Cheyennes for the wolf as a master hunter *developed over time*, and was further reinforced after they adopted horses into their cultural repertoire, which enabled them to hunt bison more efficiently.²⁰

According to ethnographers, Cheyenne cosmology is based on a hierarchical conception of the world, in which “higher” animals and elements are typically believed to hold greater power.²¹ In simple terms, the universe was divided into the World Above and the Underworld by the surface of the earth. Further divisions were populated by animals and cosmological spirits appropriate to the places where they lived and moved.²²

²⁰ There is some contestation over specific archaeological and linguistic evidence, but it appears as though proto-Cheyenne peoples descended from Algonquian-speaking tribes that can be traced to the northeastern Great Lakes, circa 1200-900 BCE (Moore 1996). Harvesting wild rice and hunting bison were probably the most important sources of food for the ancestral Cheyennes. By at least the eighteenth century, the Cheyenne had left behind sedentary farming practices to become pastoral nomadists on the Great Plains, living in teepees and incorporating horses into their cultural repertoire (Moore 1996, Grinnell [1923] 1972). Eventually, the Cheyenne separated into northern and southern bands, and these divisions, though resisted at certain times, became more rigidified due to the impoundment of these two bands on separate reservations in the late nineteenth century.

²¹ Schlesier's work differs slightly in this respect from other anthropological studies, for though he attributes ultimate cosmic power to Maheo, who resides in the “most sacred region” of the universe, the Blue Sky Space (*otatavoom*), he also assigns greater spiritual power to those animals and spirits that live within the Deep Earth and are associated with sacred caves than other writers (1987: 7-8). Moore (1996, 1984, 1979) emphasizes, contra Schlesier, that the feminine principle of the Deep Earth is devoid of spirit and therefore sterile. The top-down cosmology he describes is more masculine as one approaches the zenith, and it is incumbent upon this masculine power to “fertilize” the lower tiers with cosmic energy, reflecting a descending hierarchy of sacredness. Nevertheless, in both accounts sacred power is more intense at the height of the vertical axis.

²² For example, the highest level contains the stars, the sun and the moon, and is also the dwelling place of Maheo. The second highest level includes certain types of sacred birds, clouds, and the tops of hills and mountains, which connect the deep earth to the sky. The air closest to the earth is yet another level, containing insects, small birds, and the breath that all creatures breathe. The ground is the place of earth-bound plants, animals, rocks, humans, etc., and extends to the root tips of trees. The Deep Earth is the place where the feminine principle resides (Eschelman,

For the Cheyennes, the cosmic power of Maheo (God, the Creator, the All-Father) was encountered through relationships of respect and reciprocity with other beings, like the wolf. Such an understanding of the universe, according to Schlesier, encouraged non-objectifying relationships with other beings: “To be a Tsistsistas meant to know the interplay of spiritual and physical forms and to participate in it” (1987: 190). *Exhastoz* (cosmic power) was given by Maheo, permeated the universe, and resided in the physical bodies of non-domestic animals, humans, and plants in the form of *hematasooma* (immortal spirit; pl. *hematasoomao*) that was transmutable. By participating in the cycle of life and death, especially pronounced in the act of hunting, Cheyennes were responsible for properly releasing *hematasooma* back to the earth where it could again be incarnated. Further, animals had the protection of guardian spirits, according to their kind, who withheld or gave the animals in their charge to Cheyenne hunters. This cosmological understanding reflected the animistic views of the Cheyenne and their ancestors, one in which identity was formed through a relational epistemology.

Animals, in the Cheyenne view, were believed to be organized socially like humans. Though they were attributed lesser and higher degrees of sacredness, all animals were believed to have family structures and “chiefs” (Moore 1979: 5), protective figures that punished hunters for violating ceremonial taboos, such as not ritually releasing the animal spirit when an animal was killed.²³ As might be expected, animals of greater sacrality were classified in greater detail, while animals that were of lesser importance were often lumped together. Significantly, “The

“Our Grandmother”). In all, according to Schlesier, there are seven major tiers in the universe, all of which are permeated by *maiyun* (powerful spirits) that sometimes initiate contact with humans, and the more diffuse *exhastoz* (cosmic power) that emanates from Maheo.

²³ Similar animal guardian relationships among nomadic hunting peoples are common, frequently with a Master of Animals holding the final say as to the release of animal spirits (see, e.g., Hamayon 1994 and Jakobsen 1999).

most important of the predatory animals, as determined by the amount of classificatory attention given them, are the wolves, *honeheo*” (Moore 1979: 7).

Humans, while distinct from wolves, were perceived as taxonomically close to them, in the category of “surface animals” (*zeevassohoeva*). Both hunters on the Plains, the depth of interaction between wolves and Cheyennes led to a unique combination of social modeling and spiritual potency. The Massaum ceremony, which is the central ritual evaluated in Schlesier’s ethnography, *The Wolves of Heaven* (1987), captured these relationships in a performative medium.

The Massaum ceremony essentially “recapitulated a story about how the Cheyennes had originally gained control of the animals of the plains, to use them for food and other purposes” (Moore 1996: 228). The ritual performance of the Massaum was structured according to a mythic narrative about a Cheyenne cultural hero, Sweet Medicine, which involved his journey to Bear Butte and his gaining permission and instruction to hunt from spirit-beings, including Wolf Man and Old Woman, who were the keepers of the animal spirits.²⁴ This narrative was central to the Massaum ceremony and its re-enactment recalled the kinship that was established in mythic time between the ancestral Cheyenne and the animals of the Plains that they hunted for food.²⁵

The ceremony, which performatively enacted this “hunting covenant,” was conducted over a five-day period, beginning with the raising of the main lodge (the “wolf lodge”) and the ritual creation of the world. During the course of the ceremony, a red wolf and white wolf pair (a dimorphism that may have represented sky and earth, day and night) conducted major portions of

²⁴ For a detailed version of the mythic narrative, see Schlesier (1987: 76-80; cf. Grinnell [1923] 1972).

²⁵ The first Massaum ceremony was conducted at the foot of Bear Butte (in present-day South Dakota), the geographical site where the lodge of Wolf Man and Old Woman is located in the narrative. As the people migrated over time to different areas, this ceremony was modified in order to bring different tribal bands together and reestablish territorial hunting ranges (Schlesier 1987: 80).

the ritual, “herding” Cheyenne people dressed as various “animals” into impoundments. A climactic ceremonial hunt occurred on the fifth day, with participants emerging from their lodges in their animal incarnation to be “hunted” by the people.²⁶ After being herded into the enclosure, the animals returned to their lodges and “[t]hose in the Tsistsistas camp who were ill or disabled or who wanted a blessing directly from the animal spirits sat motionless in front of the lodges. When passing them, the animals performed brief shamanistic healing or cleansing rituals” (Schlesier 1987: 106). This “hunting” ceremony was repeated three more times with slight modifications. Afterward, the whole group journeyed to a nearby stream to conclude the ritual by drinking water and returning back to the camp as human beings. As the camp broke up over the following days, the different Cheyenne bands “went away to their fall locations where the impounding of real game in accordance with the Massaum law would begin later” (109).

The overarching framework of the Massaum ceremony indicates that the Cheyenne considered themselves deeply related to other animals, dependent on their beneficence for survival as well as for healing. The ceremony ritually encompassed and reinforced the importance of the wolf as a hunter par excellence, while also expressing the transformation between humans and other animals that was held to be possible among the Cheyenne. In short, it reinforced Cheyenne identity, celebrated their deep connection to the wolf (and other animals), and thereby reinforced the social bonds between human and nonhuman, simultaneously instructing the Cheyenne of their position in and relation to the cosmos.

Kaj Arhem, in reference to the Makuna of the Colombian Amazon, observed that cosmology reinforces ecology, that is, myths can be an efficient means of mapping territory and reinforcing particular kinds of land use. The following statement about the Makuna applies in

²⁶ Schlesier noted that nearly one-sixth of the participants played animal roles, including both sexes and all age groups.

parallel fashion to the Cheyenne: “During dramatic, collective rituals this vision of the cosmos is transformed into a powerful, personal experience for the participants, which shapes and reshapes their perceptions of reality and turns them into a normative framework for action in and on the world” (Arhem 1996: 200). However, the performance of myth must adapt, dissolve, or lose much of its potency in changing conditions. The Massaum ceremony was performed sporadically after the southern and northern Cheyenne bands were removed to reservations in Oklahoma and Montana, until it ceased to be practiced altogether after 1927.

The dissolution of the Massaum ceremony is related to anthropologist Alf Hornborg’s contention that, “Once we recognize that human subjectivity, along with the subjectivity of all the other species, is an aspect of the very *constitution* of ecosystems, we have a solid foundation for the conclusion that the destruction of meaning and the destruction of ecosystems are two aspects of the same process” (1996: 53). As animals disappear (whether through extinction or dislocation) or as people “disappear” from the landscape (through social and physical dislocation), myths no longer have the physical referents to reproduce themselves, to endow the world with specific meanings. Confined to separate reservations – and the new lifestyles which reservation life entailed – the Cheyenne adopted and adapted other rituals (e.g., the peyote church, Sun Dance, etc.) to replace important features of the Maussam ceremony that once helped them “map” the Plains, their relationships to these lands, and their indebtedness to the wolves that showed them how to hunt these lands.²⁷

The Massaum ceremony provides one example of how animistic reciprocity and cosmological kinship were reinforced through the ritual performance of sacred narratives. The

²⁷ For a concise description of the Arrow Ceremony, a four-day purification ceremony that also is strongly associated with Bear Butte, and the Sun Dance, a celebration and renewal of tribal unity as well as the ritual creation of the earth, see Moore (1996: 214-228).

Cheyenne considered themselves participants in a larger story that emphasized their dependence on other animals, and placed them within a social network that involved other-than-human persons. Wolves, in particular, were important actors in this cosmological drama, and the Cheyenne engagement and response to this “animal order” helped to meaningfully orient the Cheyenne to the lands in which they dwelled.

Wolves as Outsiders: On the Edges of (Cognitive) Maps

Unlike the worldviews of Amerindians, in which wolves were frequently held in high esteem or treated with the deference due to powerful animal “peoples,” early Euro-American settlers shared a different set of cognitive and social maps; maps inspired by the collective weight of theology, philosophy, folklore, economic desire, and social continuity. Though a good deal has been written about English (especially Puritan) ambivalence, if not hostility, toward the wilderness, Christian beliefs were not, nor were they ever, uniform. European peoples had many different reasons for crossing the Atlantic Ocean, and not everyone was interested in shining like a “city on a hill” as a righteous example of religious reform. However, a common denominator of the colonists’ prosperity, whatever their religious aspirations, did hinge on their ability to successfully breed (and eventually export) a number of “products,” including their domestic livestock.²⁸

When European explorers and settlers first landed on the shores of what would come to be known as America, one of the first things that was noticed was the potential of the continent for their domesticated animals. Though the Caribbean islands suffered an apparent scarcity of ungulates, an observation not lost on Columbus, the islands quickly became a safe harbor for

²⁸ The survival of early colonial settlements, especially during the winters in the north, was deeply tied to livestock. As Anderson (2004) detailed, while climate and demand dictated that tobacco eventually dominated in the Chesapeake colonies, by the mid-seventeenth century New England beef and pork was extensively exported to the West Indies, and, by the eighteenth century, fish was the only export commodity that outdistanced the livestock trade in New England (see esp. pp. 103-104, 151-52).

pigs and cattle imported from Spain. Soon after, sixteenth-century historians, like Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, and conquistadors like the infamous Hernán Cortés, offered glowing reports of a domestic animal paradise, tantalizing Europeans who looked to the New World for greener pastures. Likewise, in a harrowing early sixteenth-century account of shipwreck and redemption that took him from the west coast of Florida through the North American southwest, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca repeated this familiar trope, noting that the land consisted of “vast and beautiful plains that would make good pasture ... [and it] would prove very productive if developed by civilized men” (1983: 83). This emphasis on domestic stock and the “undeveloped” quality of the land foreshadowed important changes that would be enacted upon the New World landscape, as well the coming conflict between colonists, native Americans, wolves, and domesticated animals.²⁹

In what would become the southwestern United States, livestock were transported alongside exploration parties and missionaries as food-on-the-hoof and were present in large numbers by the seventeenth century.³⁰ With the exception of Puebloan peoples, most groups of Indians in the Southwest at the time of contact with the Spanish lived in bands of only a few hundred people. None of the various actors remained entirely the same post-contact. Wolf

²⁹ For an excellent historical treatment of the dramatic impacts of livestock in the Americas, see Crosby (1972, esp. pp. 74-111); see also Gerbi (1985), which provides a collection of numerous first- and second-hand reports of European impressions of flora and fauna in the Americas; and for a narrative account that weaves Columbus' journals into an overall assessment of the ecological impacts of colonization, see Sale (1990).

³⁰ For comments on introductions of cattle to the Southwest, see Brown ([1983] 2002), which provides summaries of other early reports; and Crosby (1972), which notes how integral livestock (particularly cattle and sheep) were to Spanish colonization. Crosby underscored that “The figure in the history of colonial America who is most characteristically Iberian is the rancher on horseback observing his herds of livestock, most often herds of cattle. When faced with the immense grasslands of America, the Englishman paused, called them deserts and tried to find a way around them. The Spaniard embraced the plains, the llanos, the pampas, drove his cattle onto them, and let the multiplying beeves make a good life for him. As a result, there were probably more cattle in the New World in the seventeenth century than any other type of vertebrate immigrant” (1972: 85). For the Iberian roots of cattle ranching in the Southwest, in addition to Crosby (1972), see Starrs (1999: 44-50), which also includes a bibliographic essay (pp. 327-346) that is a treasure trove for different sources on cattle ranching in the West.

populations likely increased, feeding on unguarded or feral cattle, which resulted in genetic mixing among relatively isolated subspecies. A parallel “ethnic stew” (smaller groups that banded together into new social formations) – as historian Gary Anderson phrased it – occurred among Native peoples who had to adapt to the fragmentation of their societies because of Spanish incursions.³¹

Building on William Cronon’s pathbreaking environmental history *Changes in the Land* (1983), both Virginia DeJohn Anderson (2004) and Jon Coleman (2004) have drawn attention to the critical role domestic animals played in transforming early colonial settlements, underscoring that humans were not the sole agents of environmental change. Domestic alliances between livestock and humans ensured the colonists’ survival but also brought them into direct and indirect conflict with wolves. Cattle, pigs, and sheep – forms of mobile property – early created problems for wolves, who unwittingly violated the colonizers sense of territory and animal husbandry by preying on these newly available food sources.

The unfavorable symbolic associations that wolves inherited from European colonists did not help their status. As one writer understated, in the colonies wolves had a massive “public relations problem” (Grambo 2005: 125). While wolf bounties were established in North America as early as 1630 in an attempt to silence the “howling” wilderness (a popular auditory description of the New England forests), the spread of fixed human settlements was a more

³¹ For a detailed reconstruction of Pueblo societies and their interactions with the Spanish colonizers, see Guitierrez (1991). Because of scant remaining evidence, it is difficult to determine how many subspecies of gray wolves may have been present in the Southwest. One of the first thorough attempts (Young and Goldman 1944) listed five, but this has since been reevaluated (see Nowak 2003). What is more certain is that livestock introduction encouraged the breakdown of any such distinctions, especially with the decimation of native ungulates in the late nineteenth century (Brown [1983] 2002: 9). By the beginning of the eighteenth century, Apaches dominated western sections of the southern plains and the mountains of New Mexico, challenging both Puebloans and Spanish for control of the Southwest’s political economy, which led to the “Apacheanization” of the region. After the 1750s, the Apache economy began to suffer at the hands of the Spanish, and they broke into smaller bands that relied on Spanish livestock within a “poaching and raiding” economy (Anderson 1999; see also Radding 1997); a surprisingly similar “economy” occurred among wolves who were adapting in their own ways.

devastating development for them.³² Creating a “New” England meant transforming the North American landscape according to a vision of what a civilized land *should* look like; it also reflected the colonizers distinction between animals of utility and animals that stood in the way of “civilization,” as informed by a Christian worldview.³³ In his first-hand, promotional account *New England’s Prospect* (1634), William Wood wrote that despite the bounties set on wolves, “there is little hope of their utter destruction, the country being so spacious and they so numerous.” Wood summarized his findings about “these ravenous rangers” with an economic lament, “In a word they [wolves] be the greatest inconveniency the country hath, both for the matter of damage to private men in particular, and the whole country in general” (Wood 1977: 46).

Early maps of the New World put to paper what was on the colonists’ minds. As Anderson observed, cartographers who drew maps of early colonial settlements dotted the landscape with domestic animals, constructing scenes that expressed conceptions of what

³² In many cases, colonists simply let their animals loose to roam the forests and swamps, resulting in feral animals, increased conflict with Indians, and continued disputes over livestock damage and theft (Anderson 2004: 9, 114-123, 158-166). The conflict came in fits and starts as the number of immigrants grew. As Coleman observed, “European colonists did not march across new England from east to west driving wolves before them. Instead, humans and wolves coexisted belligerently for more than an hundred years in a patchwork landscape of agricultural strongholds and feral woods” (2004: 53).

³³ One aspect of regarding wildlands as threatening places, populated by “savage” peoples and “savage” animals, was that Native Americans and wolves were often conflated rhetorically and their behaviors seen as confirmation that “uncivilized” landscapes demanded the taming hand of European culture and Christian religion. Natives in New England and in the Southwest both practiced forms of agriculture appropriate to the climate, but unlike the colonizers, did not do so with domesticated animal assistance (Anderson 2004: 6, 32-37; Crosby 1972: 74-75, 94-100). While the Spanish initially debated the human status of Indians, and whether or not they were fully human and could be converted to Catholicism, the English “looked to Roman legal theory to justify their imperial ambitions,” relying heavily on “the concept of *res nullius*, which held that ‘empty things,’ including land, remained common property until they were put to use” (Anderson 2004: 78). Though, of course, the Indians were using the land, they were not using it in ways familiar to English colonists, and, as the colonists gained in numbers and power, the Indians essentially forfeited any claims to the English. Anderson (2004: 11, 32-33, 76-77, 80-81) describes a pattern of expansion that used livestock “as the advance guard and primary motive” for acquiring these new territories: livestock were released onto Indian territory, Indians first objected then retaliated, and colonists reacted by appropriating the land. Domestic animals, for both Indians and wolves, were thus hoofed tools for displacement and acquisition. In a somewhat more haphazard fashion, livestock in the arid Southwest also forged far and wide, limiting the amount of supervision possible, and, to put it mildly, creating conflicts of interest (Crosby 1972: 86-88, 98-100, 108-113; Brown [1983] 2002: 14, 21).

separated them from the uncivilized, and “like the tiny houses or churches that marked the locations of colonial towns, cows symbolized the parts of America that had become civilized” (2004: 83).³⁴ The idea that cows, churches, and civilization went hand-in-hoof was informed by a religious framework in which pastoral metaphors offered support for colonial and frontier ambitions.

The Lamb(s) of God and The Good Shepherd

Although occasional positive religious symbols of wolves, and predator animals more generally, occur in Western literature and art, other forces have made these more favorable symbols exceptions to the rule.³⁵ How different the history of European treatment of wolves might have been had wolves fared better symbolically in Christian text and iconography is difficult to ascertain. That said, the choice of animal symbols as they relate to religious narratives and images is not an arbitrary phenomenon; they reflect concrete human experiences of and ideals projected upon the natural world.

A good deal of scholarly attention has been given to the *creation narrative* in Genesis and its formative role in Christian moral anthropology, as well as its influence on human uses and abuses of other animals (see, for example, White 1967; Ruether 1992; Callicott 1994;

³⁴ Early sixteenth-century Spanish explorer Cabeza de Vaca, who washed ashore on or near Galveston Island with the remnants of some of the Florida expedition of which he was second in command, was told by one of his shipmates “that the ground looked as if cattle had trampled it and that therefore this must be a country of Christians [the generic term used to refer to the Spanish]” (1983: 55) – a revealing comment. See also Coleman (2004: 21, 52-53) on early place-names in New England that used “wolf” as a modifier to mark wild and uncultivated places.

³⁵ The most common instances of favorable depictions of predator animals in Christian texts and art are found in hagiographical works or iconography about Christian saints, such as the stories about St. Jerome (who translated the Bible into Latin) and his lion companion (Hobgood-Oster 2007a and 2007b). For a sympathetic scholarly treatment of the relationships between Christian monastics and predator animals, including materials about wolves in Celtic Christian traditions, see Bratton (1993: 165-175, 179-181, 185-189, 211-215). Typically, however, the positive role of such predators served as an affirmation of the saint’s holiness and ability to bring peace to those with whom he or she came into contact. It might be instructive to consider that one of the most prominent visual and textual images of Jesus with reference to nonhuman animals is displayed every holiday season in the form of Nativity scenes, in which the setting is a barnyard (see Bratton 2008: 28-29, 37 for discussion of early Nativity scenes of “God’s creatures and their willing participation in the sacred event”). Nonetheless, Bratton’s (2008) examination of Christian art throughout the centuries provides excellent counterarguments to the stereotype of Christianity as always and everywhere encouraging the domination of nature.

Oeslschlaeger 1991, 1994; Hiebert 1996; DeWitt 2000). Less attention has been given to another key symbol and metaphor within Christian tradition that bears particularly on the way that predator animals, and especially wolves, have been treated.

Far and away, the most ubiquitous animal icon used to represent Jesus, from the beginnings of the early Church even until the present, has been that of a lamb.³⁶ (See figures 2-1 and 2-2.) Within Christianity, the lamb is associated with sacrificial atonement, especially in the Johannine writings (i.e., the Gospel of John, 1-3 John, and the book of Revelation). That is, a pure lamb (without blemish) is offered meekly to God through Jesus' crucifixion, carrying away the sins of others through its/his death. Drawing upon animal metaphors to represent heady, and potentially confusing, theological concepts such as atonement (though, such concepts were derived from ancient Israel and their continued expression in Jewish traditions),³⁷ the pastoral idiom provided early Christians with a comprehensible set of metaphors that were intended to clarify the theological significance of the events of Jesus' life. The Johannine writings present Jesus as both humble shepherd and sacrificial lamb, guarding the flock and "laying down his life" for that same flock.

One of the reasons such an animal metaphor "made sense," and continued to make sense, to the Christian faithful was due in no small part to the continuities between the mixed agrarian economies of the Mediterranean highlands and the pastoral economies of Europe in the Middle

³⁶ The early Christian community in particular favored Jesus as a sacrificial lamb or as the Good Shepherd (see Bratton 2008, esp. pp. 37-41). Until the seventh century, the crucifixion of Jesus, despite the wealth of textually based theological reflections on this event, remained a rare visual image in art. Bratton detailed some of the different symbolic twists lamb imagery took throughout the history of the Christian Church; especially interesting is its disappearance as an artistic motif from the late seventh century to the late Middle Ages because of an emphasis on Christ's "human form" as well as a preference for more militant imagery (2008: 55-58).

³⁷ For an excellent treatment of sacrifice in ancient Israel, its metaphorical connection to imitating the divine shepherd, and corresponding biblical verses in which God is described as shepherd, see Klawans (2006, esp. n. 44).

Ages.³⁸ Domesticated animals (at least until their meat was desired) relied on the care of their human guardians to ensure their well-being. This relationship created fertile metaphorical possibilities for depicting those other “outside” threats that buffeted the “good” sheep – and moral/symbolic goodness and utility experienced frequent slippages throughout history, with the notion of a “good” animal dependent on its being a useful one.

The English poet Thomas Tillam found reason to invoke the metaphor in the unimaginative if accurately titled “Uppon the First Sight of New-England June 29, 1638.” The “holy land” of the New England coast inspired the following reflection: “Methinks I heare the Lambe of God thus speake / Come my deare little flocke, who for my sake / Have lefte your Country, dearest friends, and goods / And hazarded your lives o’th raginge floods / Posses this Country; free from all anoye / Heare I’le bee with you, heare you shall In joye / My Sabbaths, sacraments, my minestrye / And ordinances in their puritye” (Tillam, in Gatta 2004: 16).

The use of the symbolic image of Jesus as lamb raises a question that may set the treatment of actual wolves in bold relief: What if Jesus was metaphorically depicted as a wolf instead of a lamb? One’s first instinct may be to smirk at such a proposition, and, indeed, conjuring up an image of a passive wolf draped across the shoulders of shepherd creates some cognitive dissonance (unless of course the wolf is dead). This very reaction may alert us to how deeply lupine images and their negative associations have penetrated Western culture.

Why should wolves not be considered a valuable symbolic candidate? After all, their social bonds might make them ideally suited to the kind of deep care that Jesus held for his

³⁸ Though Christianity quickly became a largely urban phenomenon as its first apostles spread the gospel message to various Mediterranean urban centers, the pastoral images one finds in early Christian texts were often drawn from the language of the countryside. The “lamb of God” like its larger sheep-like constituency (John 10; 1 Peter 2.25; Heb. 13.20) were conceptualized as “innocent” creatures, oppressed on all sides by “wolves” that would rob them of not only their faith but possibly their lives (John 10.12; artistic renditions of the story of *Susanna and the Elders* – in the apocryphal Dan. 13 – relied on this metaphor, along with its sexual suggestions).

disciples; wolves' "courage" in defending their territory against encroachment might make them symbolic candidates for the defense of the Christian faith; or wolf pack structure might make a fitting metaphor for church polity. Of course, wolves were attributed such positive attributes in some places, and increasingly such "family values" are emphasized by those who wish to reverse negative wolf stereotypes. However, to depict Jesus iconographically as a wolf would have been an absurdity (or blasphemy) in most European and North American contexts because the wolf is a symbol that does not fit easily with the reservoir of metaphors to which pastoral images can appeal.

Another prominent pastoral image within the Christian Church, imaginatively allied to the image of the Lamb of God, was the depiction of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (see John 10.1-30; cf. Isa. 40.11, Jer. 23.1-6, Ezek. 34; see also figures 2-3 and 2-4).³⁹ Susan Bratton notes that "Of all the late ancient personae of Christ, the Good Shepherd is the most evident, and is certainly the characterization of Jesus most strongly associated with nature and animals" (2008: 24). In addition to the biblical passages noted above, the image of Jesus carrying a sheep on his shoulders strongly evokes the Gospel parable of the lost sheep, in which Jesus compared God to a loving shepherd who goes in search of a wayward lamb (Matt. 18.10-14; Lk. 15.3-7), as well as Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want..."). This artistic motif, appearing in early frescoes, sarcophagi carvings, and catacomb murals, however, was borrowed rather directly, as Bratton explains, from the pre-Christian myth of Orpheus, which connoted Orpheus' power to soothe and attract all varieties of animals (Bratton 2008: 26-27, 32-33).⁴⁰ For Christians in the

³⁹ They are even combined in artistic renderings, at times, with the flock looking to a slightly elevated sheep as its metaphorical shepherd (see Bratton 2008: 25; cf. 100).

⁴⁰ Even if New Testament writings and official church doctrine were sometimes cast in dualistic and/or apocalyptic language, or written Christian polemics by the early church "fathers" raved against the heretics that were perceived to threaten the foundations of orthodoxy, certain artistic motifs were (quite naturally) adapted, absorbed, and further

first centuries of the Common Era, a time of heavy persecution, protective themes of the Good Shepherd blended rather seamlessly with visions of eschatological destinations: the salvation of God's "sheep" and assurance of their final peace, if not in this world would certainly come in the next.⁴¹

The shepherd metaphor maintained its strength, and may have even gained strength, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. For colonists, it was all too easy to wax spiritually against wolves since domestic livestock ensured not only their prosperity but their survival. For example, in a pamphlet entitled *Little Flocks Guarded against Grievous Wolves* (1691), the third-generation Puritan minister Cotton Mather pinned the wolf label on Quakers whom he feared might destroy the bonds of his faithful community. The wolf metaphor was indeed a flexible one when even pacifist Quakers could be compared to wolves, but in any number of

elaborated upon by the Christian church. At least in early Christian art (2nd-4th c. CE), according to Bratton, "nature may be chaotic and dangerous, but it is not a font of evil. ... [N]atural images are predominantly metaphors for peace, plenty and eternal renewal" (2008: 230). Reflecting a vision of God's peaceful reign, Christian art greatly modified or attenuated Greek and Roman themes of battling wild nature, centaurs, or uncivilized barbarian hordes: "Christian art does not call an absolute truce in the Roman war with wildlife, but it greatly reduces the prominence of violent animal death as an indicator of human valor. A human attacking an animal is relatively rare in the earliest Christian art. Exceptions are biblical scenes such as Sampson killing the lion with his bare hands... Christians not only ignore the artistic hunts and the circuses, they also largely drop the use of designs depicting one animal attacking another" (Bratton 2008: 22; cf. pp. 37-41, 93-95, 230).

⁴¹ Bratton noted the irony of the increase in more militant themes in Christological imagery in the Middle Ages: "[I]t appears that the late ancient barbarian nobility, on entering the green pastures of Christian conversion, brought their swords with them, and ultimately conscripted the Good Shepherd" (2008: 242). Historian Donald Worster, following Lynn White's (1967) line of argument is less charitable toward the Christian pastoral idiom: "In the Christian version of the pastoral dream, the shepherd does not merge with nature through his flock nor is his occupation a protest against urban alienation from the natural world, both of which are key themes in the arcadian version. On the contrary, he is the defender of the flock *against* the hostile forces of nature – wolves, lions bears – and his profession is to lead his lambs out of this sorry world to greener pastures" (1994: 26, italics in original). Worster, always an eloquent writer, overstates his case, in my view, by overlooking the Christian social commentary embedded in images like the Good Shepherd against Roman hierarchies, militarism, and animal sacrifice. Because Worster frames his analysis with the ideal types of Arcadian and Imperial, he seems puzzled by examples of Christians who muddle Imperial expectations; sometimes he attributes this to the strong influence of paganism on these figures (28), sometimes to a "peculiar ambivalence" (31). An alternative interpretation is that there were streams within Christianity (much more widespread than the isolated example of St. Francis) that encouraged reverence for nature, as Bratton (1993, 2008) argued.

cases where the “innocent” in-group faced an oppositional threat from an out-group, wolves served as a potent and repeated “othering” metaphor.⁴²

If the metaphor of the Good Shepherd and Jesus as the Lamb of God offer imaginative windows into thinking about Christology, it is also clear that their application need not stop there.⁴³ The intended take-away Christian lesson from symbols such as the Good Shepherd may have been humility before a beneficent God, but humility toward other animals was not a necessary corollary. The labels of “innocent” and “guilty” animals, projections though they may be, did factor into how wolves were viewed in the United States, as evidenced by popular adjectival appellations for wolves such as “thieving,” “ravenous,” “cruel,” and “wasteful.” Christian moralizing about wolves – through literature, in Scripture, and in art – certainly provided no incentive to curb hatred for wolves and often provided an additional justification for their deaths. In a notable application of the Shepherd /sheep/wolves metaphor, wolf trapper and civil war veteran Ben Corbin justified his project with particular literalness:

In Genesis we read that [Abraham] was rich in cattle, in silver and in gold – something like the ranchmen and stockmen of North Dakota. Indeed the pastoral life preceded every other profession. The Patriarchs were all shepherds. . . . In the New Testament, the parable of the Good Shepherd shines like a star. If Jesus did not disdain to call himself the Good Shepherd, why should any man in Dakota not be proud to be called by that name, or to be associated as I am, with the men who are feeding their flocks on the rich and abundant pastures of this great commonwealth? Largely my life has been spent in protecting these flocks against the incursions of ravenous beasts of prey. I know it is but a step and the first step, which counts in the march of civilization (Corbin [1900] 1995: 123).

⁴² During the colonial period, these symbols were given imaginative heft by contact with actual wolves, and when it came to the flesh-and-blood wolves that threatened colonists’ livestock, the protections and care required for domesticated animals often led to surrogate feelings of victimization. Coleman highlighted this irony when he noted that “In the course of becoming the most dominant predator on the continent, Euro-Americans often conceived of themselves as prey” (Coleman 10; cf. p. 229). See also Coleman on the oft-beleaguered Church of Latter-Day Saints’ reliance on wolf metaphors (2004: 137-143, 148-149, 167-171) to characterize their opponents.

⁴³ Thomas Tweed’s discussion of metaphor as a “lens and a vehicle” is helpful for understanding the ways in which metaphors direct attention while also prompting action (2006: 46-48).

The “march of civilization” gave no quarter to wolves, and Corbin and likeminded Americans welcomed it with millennial fervor. There were, however, more benign versions of eschatological expectation present in the biblical narrative. Though some scholars have looked to creation narratives as decisive in informing people how to view and act toward the natural world, less attention has been given to the importance of the brackets on the other end of the Christian cosmological timeline. As social ethicist Anna Peterson noted, “Visions of the end of human life tie together religious narratives, revealing not only the end of the story but also the reason for its telling in the first place. The beginning of a story establishes a particular vision of creation ... but the hoped-for (or feared) end of the story may often be more important to motivating action” (2001: 9-10).

One such end-time narrative is the prophetic expectation of a harmonious finale for all of creation (Isaiah 11.6-9), in which the wolf, the lion, and the lamb, among others, lie down together – a time when the “horrors,” both symbolic and real, of predation are reconciled by the power of God’s final peace.⁴⁴ Sometimes referred to as the “peaceable kingdom,” a phrase made more popular by the paintings of Pennsylvanian Quaker Edward Hicks (1780-1849), this millennial vision of future peace for the natural world has provided inspiration to some within the contemporary animal rights movement.⁴⁵ (See figure 2-5.)

Theology professor, vegetarian and animal welfare activist Andrew Linzey, for example, might be considered the contemporary champion of the peaceable kingdom – even winning the

⁴⁴ Interestingly, given the fecund fields that usually serve as the backdrop for the Good Shepherd, the heavenly kingdom depicted in the Book of Revelation recapitulates the Isaianic prophecy with an urban twist; in the new heaven and new earth of John’s vision, a radiant *city* of Jerusalem (identified as “the bride of the Lamb” in Rev. 21.9) descends from celestial heights. In this triumphal urban paradise, “nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21.27). In the end, the Lamb (and his “unblemished” servants) reign – with no wolves in sight.

⁴⁵ For millennialism as a prominent American ideology, often serving as a tool of control and manipulation over the forces of a recalcitrant natural world, and its relationship to “manifest destiny,” see Albanese (1990, 2002).

Peaceable Kingdom Medal in 1990 for his work.⁴⁶ Linzey has been a prolific writer on topics concerning the treatment of animals, and his views on predation are worthy of comment since they represent one way in which contemporary Christian theology may continue to condemn wolves (as predators) in the present, even while promoting compassion toward nonhuman animals in general.⁴⁷

In *Animal Theology* (1995), Linzey asserted that Genesis 1 promotes a vegetarian ideal as well as the “fundamental insight that parasitical existence is incompatible with the original will of God” (1995: 80). Given his concerns with the abuses of factory farming, Linzey may have been well justified in characterizing meat-eating as “parasitical” for humans, but he did not stop at the moral implications of Genesis for humans. Within the parameters of the Christian theological understanding of the Creation-Fall-Redemption narrative, Linzey affirmed that creation is good but that the created world remains incomplete and unfulfilled. Of particular significance to him was the cosmic Isaianic vision of the lion and the lamb lying down together (Isa. 11.6). The point of Isaiah’s vision according to Linzey “is not that animality will be destroyed by divine love but rather *that animal nature is in bondage to violence and predation*” (1995: 82, emphasis mine; cf. pp. 128-129). Being freed from such animality, Linzey asserted, is part of the human struggle to achieve a “higher order of existence” (1995: 90).⁴⁸ Hence, against

⁴⁶ A volume which Linzey co-edited with Dorothy Yamamoto (1998) also includes one of Hick’s peaceable kingdom paintings on its cover.

⁴⁷ For how the vision of a peaceable kingdom was popular among early humane organizations in Great Britain and America, see Mighetto (1991). The differences between animal liberationist/welfare perspectives and environmental ethics have been elucidated by a number of environmental philosophers. For a devastating critique of animal rights scholar Tom Regan’s work – which attempts to deal with animal predation through a form of amoral exceptionalism – see Callicott (1989c).

⁴⁸ Linzey follows a not uncommon line of argumentation among animal liberationists throughout his book that includes an understanding of animal sacrifice (religious or otherwise) as a morally backward practice. For Linzey, an authentic Christian ethic leaves behind such primitiveness. For the discomfort of scholars with animal sacrifice, especially in how it is expressed among the ancient Israelites, and a reclamation of its importance, see Eilberg-Schwartz (1990). For a nuanced wrestling with the ways in which animal sacrifice has been interpreted away by

those who would claim that nature operates according to its own self-organizing laws, Linzey stated that Isaiah's vision "invites us to the imaginative recognition that God's transforming love is not determined even by what we think we know of elementary biology" (1995: 82-83).

Linzey raised valid concerns about the tendency to look to nature for some kind of moral imperative, the so-called *naturalistic fallacy*, but though rightly questioning the validity of human excuses and justifications for violent behavior, his claims – based on a particular interpretation of Christian eschatology – assigned all predator animals to a fallen (though good) creation in need of moral redemption. As Linzey he put it:

The complex truth—in theological terms—to which this debate corresponds is the dual recognition that God as the Creator of all things must have created a world which is morally good—or at least be justified in the end as a morally justifiable process—and also the insight that parasitism and predation are unlovely, cruel, evil aspects of the world ultimately incapable of being reconciled with a God of love (1998: 22).

In sum, Linzey's theological logic causes him to defend God's moral standing by labeling predation as an evil to be overcome. Though Linzey represents only one possible Christian theological interpretation among many, the notion of a fallen world subject to decay until humans (and/or God) restore is widespread in Western history.⁴⁹

As far as the notion of a peaceable kingdom is concerned, then, wolves were welcomed, and then only conditionally, into the future kingdom of God. Until that time, they must suffer for

scholars to make it more conceptually comfortable, and an argument that, prior to ethical analysis, sacrifice must be understood by its internal logic, as an elevation of animals as interactive (even "theophoric") subjects in a variety of religious traditions, see Patton (2006).

⁴⁹ For Western concepts of "returning" to a state of original Edenic purity, see Merchant (2003). Linzey did address some Christian theologians who view predation as part of the natural "Eucharistic law of the universe" (Michael Fox, in Linzey 1995: 119), but based on his reading of Jesus' ministry, he argued that such notions are antithetical to a gospel of liberation from death, bondage, suffering, and violence (Linzey 1995: 118-124). For Linzey, God's revelation ultimately trumps the apparent order of nature, for as he argued, "The biblical orientation is not to baptize the 'laws of the universe' as the purposes of God but rather to look to their transformation and fulfillment. If we are to appeal to the life and teaching of Jesus as the revelation of God, we cannot avoid the fact that so much of his life challenges, if not contradicts, the order of the world as we know it" (1995: 123).

their gustatory sins. And, historically, many people have been unwilling to wait on God to set things right.

It would be careless to vilify the whole of Christianity as somehow bearing sole responsibility for wolf eradication.⁵⁰ Many factors, including economic concerns, social continuity, and patterns of land management, were and are at play. The larger point is that the decisive influence of the cosmological and eschatological narratives of Christian traditions in the United States has made it easier to claim that wolves are “just an animal” or even a representative of “natural evil” in a world awaiting redemption – certainly, in both cases, unworthy of the attention that they are increasingly receiving.

By way of contrast, various nature writers and social critics in the twentieth and twenty-first century expressed forms of animistic perception that defied the implications of the Peaceable Kingdom vision in which predators provide evidence of a flawed, waiting-to-be-redeemed world. These writers articulated an “animal order” that exulted in the empirical givenness of natural predation, viewing this violence as integral to a larger process of cosmic beauty.

⁵⁰ It should be borne in mind that the links between Christianity and degradation of the natural world, or the dismissal of nonhuman animals, are not straightforward, even though some have proposed such a causal relationship. In an influential article entitled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis” (1967), historian Lynn White posited that Western religions (and Christianity in particular) were culpable for an increasing environmental crisis due to their dependence on a doctrine of creation that mandated human dominion over the earth. White’s assertion that Christianity is the “most anthropocentric religion the world has seen,” has been repeated in various forms by many who have reasoned that Western religious ideology is largely responsible for uncontrolled technological intrusions and environmental destruction – though this is belied by the evidence that other cultures, with and without advanced technologies, have destroyed or severely degraded their environments (Tuan 1968, Hughes 1994, Diamond 2005). For an overview of critical responses to White, see Whitney (2005), Proctor and Berry (2005), and Kalland (2005). For an outstanding critique of White’s interpretation of the Genesis creation narratives, see Hiebert (1996: 155).

Edward Abbey, for example, certainly had his own view of the Peaceable Kingdom. A self-appointed “earthiest,”⁵¹ in his popular memoir of his experiences as a seasonal park ranger, *Desert Solitaire* (1968), Abbey quipped, “Paradise is not a garden of bliss and changeless perfection where the lions lied down like lambs (what would they eat?)...” (1968: 190). Throughout his writings, Abbey eschewed heavenly speculation in favor of an earth that was “the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need – if only we had the eyes to see” (ibid.). In contrast to the Christian idea that Adam and Eve’s primal “fall” resulted in humanity’s estrangement from God, Abbey asserted that “Original sin, the true original sin is the blind destruction for the sake of greed of this natural paradise which lies all around us – if only we were worthy of it” (ibid.).

Abbey’s earthy paradise, in other words, was one in which humans had to accept their place in a world of otherness, a world full of thorny edges that resisted conformity to human designs. Unsurprisingly, his vision of Eden was influenced by the Southwestern landscape he called home: “Now when I write of paradise I mean Paradise, not the banal Heaven of the saints. When I write ‘paradise’ I mean not only apple trees and golden women but also scorpions and tarantulas and flies, rattlesnakes and Gila monsters, sandstorms, volcanos and earthquakes, bacteria and bear, cactus, yucca, bladderweed, ocotillo and mesquite, flash floods and quicksand, and yes – disease and death and rotting flesh” (1968: 190). Naturally occurring events like death and predation, for Abbey – and unlike the biblical narrative – were sacred events, part of a larger cycle that contributed to the beauty of the earth’s diversity “if only we had the eyes to see.”

⁵¹ Abbey referred to his spiritual understandings as “earthiesm” both in print (1968: 208) and to friends (Loeffler 2002). In his words, “Why confuse the issue by dragging in a superfluous entity? Occam’s razor. Beyond atheism, nontheism. I am not an atheist but an earthiest. Be true to the earth” (1968: 208). Thus, Abbey’s fundamental reference point, his religious orientation, lay in an earthy materialism not in a transcendent heavenly realm: “Men come and go, cities rise and fall, whole civilizations appear and disappear – the earth remains, slightly modified. The earth remains, and the heartbreaking beauty where there are no hearts to break. ... Under the desert sun, in that dogmatic clarity, the fables of theology and the myths of classical philosophy dissolve like mist” (1968: 219).

Other unwilling Peaceable Kingdom adherents, like the poet Robinson Jeffers, early challenged the notion that predation was somehow evidence of a flawed cosmos.⁵² Jeffers' religiosity has most often been described as pantheistic, though he accepted the designation somewhat grudgingly. In his Library of Congress speech in 1941 he stated that his religious feeling "perhaps must be called pantheism, though I hate to type it with that name," since he thought this was too commonly associated with "Oriental pantheism," which he considered a world-denying religiosity (Jeffers, in Glaser 1995: 175). For Jeffers, the entirety of nature was the only thing worthy of reverence, and elevated conceptions of humanity were misplaced. As his poem "Double Axe" exhorted, "And as to love: love God. He is rock, earth and water, and / the beast and stars; and the night that contains them. ... / But truly, if you love man / swallow him in wine: love man in God. / Man and nothing but man is a sorry mouthful" (Jeffers 1948).

One of the most striking qualities of Jeffers' poems was their acceptance and even honor of natural violence. Though he despaired at times over human cruelty and brutality, occasionally envisioning a cleansing of the earth of its ungrateful human inhabitants (particularly in the poems "November Surf" and "Post Mortem"), Jeffers viewed the brutality of the natural world with reverence.⁵³ One poem among many that captures this perception is "The Bloody Sire," an ode to the importance of natural violence: "What but the wolf's tooth whittled so fine / The fleet

⁵² While he was critically acclaimed in the 1920s, and sporadically thereafter, the content of Jeffers' poems alienated him from a wider audience for most of his life. Jeffers' poems found a new audience in succeeding generations, particularly among those who identified the natural world – its cycles, its violence, its sometimes inhospitable but nevertheless beautiful indifference to humans – as sacred.

⁵³ Responding to some of his critics in the preface of *The Double Axe*, Jeffers described the inhumanism of his poems as "a shifting of emphasis and significance from man to not-man; the rejection of human solipsism and recognition of the transhuman magnificence" (Jeffers 1948: vii). By acknowledging the "transhuman magnificence" of the natural world, Jeffers believed humans could awaken to a more mature understanding of their place on earth. He continued, "It seems time that our race began to think as an adult does, rather than like an egocentric baby or insane person. This manner of thought and feelings is neither misanthropic nor pessimist, though two or three people have said so and may again. ... It offers a reasonable detachment as rule of conduct, instead of love, hate and envy. It neutralizes fanaticism and wild hopes; but it provides magnificence for the religious instinct, and satisfies our need to admire greatness and rejoice in beauty" (1948: vii).

limbs of the antelope? / What but fear winged the birds, and hunger / Jewelled with such eyes the great goshawk's head? / Violence has been the sire of all the world's values" (Jeffers 2003: 166). For Jeffers, the world needed the "wolf's tooth," for it was part of the a fine-tuning process that ultimately led to greater manifestations of beauty.

Many more examples of American contrarians and gadflies could be named, but Abbey and Jeffers illustrate that some have looked to the interconnected processes of the natural world as a reference point for tempering or subverting notions of human superiority while simultaneously expressing kinship with other forms of life. In respect to wolves, until well into the twentieth century, the vast majority of Americans took another path. The conscience pains of clearing the landscape of wolves were alleviated in the process of converting the frontier into a peaceable domestic kingdom. What objection could a Good Shepherd muster against such a project?

Worshipping the Created? Accusations of Paganism

This foray into different "animal orders" offers some background into why wolves might be perceived as "insiders" or "outsiders" – participants in a larger cosmic order that one must learn to respectfully negotiate, on the one hand, or evidence of a flawed creation in need of redemption, on the other. It also helps to make sense of some of the deep-seated conflicts that continue to inhere to wolf recovery projects. These conflicts are evident in many of the debates about wolf recovery, and can be more clearly perceived by returning to the narrative with which I began this chapter.

What might someone intend by calling a person a "pagan" for desiring wolf recovery, and is the accusation of paganism accurate? The charge does not hold in the particular case of Bobbie Holaday, who explicitly resisted such a characterization. Inasmuch as the label was intended to invoke unacceptable difference, however, it was apt, for Holaday and others who

share her convictions do not fit into the “normal” or “common sense” paradigm of humans always and everywhere receiving first (or sole) consideration in decisions about land use.⁵⁴

The term “paganism” itself has only been reclaimed in the past two centuries – especially since the 1970s (Hutton 1999, Pike 2004) – as a term of positive identification among those who practice some form of earth-related religion. Possibly David Robart had such (neo-) Pagan groups of people in mind. Environmental activism is a part of some Pagans’ ritual/political practice, and some pagans could be characterized as “wolf lovers,” so there are overlaps.⁵⁵ It is more likely, however, that Robart was relying on the more “classical” use of the term. In its early usages, paganism was a term deployed by Christians to disparage those who practiced non-Christian religions (Harvey 2005) or warn against the dangers of participating in practices that were ritually associated with other (it was assumed, false) gods.

The question I would like to pursue further is not whether all wolf supporters are Pagans, which they certainly are not, but whether the offending “others” were actually being accused of a form of animism. There are four charges, bundled together, in Robart’s statement: 1) wolves limit *our* (that is, ranchers and other rural dwellers) access to public lands, 2) wolf lovers worship the created, not the Creator, 3) since the wolf was created by God, it was not meant to be

⁵⁴ In her book *Being Human*, Peterson offers a helpful summation of the ways in which humans, in Western cultures, have typically been viewed as discontinuous with the rest of the animal world. Such differences, as Peterson noted, are often interpreted as signaling human superiority: “Most Western belief systems define humans as unique among the rest of life: humans are the only animal with *x*, some essential trait lacking in all other animals and setting people not only apart from but also above them. Western religions generally point to an eternal soul as the candidate for *x*, while secular philosophies often focus on rational thought and capacity for conceptual language. While there are important differences between (and within) the dominant Western theological and secular approaches to human uniqueness, central to both have been the assumptions that some crucial quality radically separates humans from nonhuman animals and ‘nature’ generally” (2001: 2).

⁵⁵ For the relationship between paganism and environmental activism, generally, see Nelson (2005). For more detailed descriptions of how wolves and pagan spirituality figure into radical environmental thought and “evangelism,” see Taylor (2002). One environmentalist whom I interviewed during my research told me she was a “goddess-worshipping pagan” and knew of several other pagan practitioners involved in wolf activism; however, most of the wolf advocates I interviewed construed themselves as broadly “spiritual” and/or eschewed institutional religion.

singled out for such attention, and 4) supporters of wolf reintroduction believe wolves are more important than humans.

It would seem that the most offensive charge is the first; without it, there would be no prompt for further accusations of abnormality. The problem is access to public lands, and though wolves rarely directly limit such access (unless seasonal denning sites are temporarily closed to the public), the lack of “access” described here involves fears over any additional restrictions applied to the National Forest lands utilized by livestock owners. The “limits” if wolves were in these areas would be the possibility of predation on unsupervised livestock. Note that, instead of “pagans,” the federal government could be blamed (and, in other cases which are later described, often is), but in this rhetorical context the problem is identified as an inordinate care (“worship”) for wolves by “wolf lovers.”⁵⁶

To consider the needs of wolves is, in this context, an affront to God (“the Creator”), as an act of idolatry (“worship”) that reverences something less-than-God (“the created”). Beyond these theological assertions, though, is the crux of the matter: in making sense of why someone might want to limit livestock growers’ access to public lands, the speaker expresses the feeling that a (mere) animal is being given preferential treatment, above the livelihoods of a particular group of human beings.⁵⁷ Though ranchers may not identify as Christians, they often express a “traditional” Western understanding of the ontological division between humans and other

⁵⁶ In this case, it is clearly beside the point that many people who support wolf reintroduction often appeal to a broader concern for the ecosystem (or biodiversity, or “natural harmony”) rather than just wolves. The label of “wolf lover” sticks in a way that does not add unnecessary confusion about ecosystem science or the values accorded to biodiverse environments.

⁵⁷ The following comment by Montana rancher Jack Sullivan, made during a public meeting regarding the Yellowstone wolf reintroduction, highlighted this contention well: “The wolf isn’t going to add one nickel to the economy. The people that are working for a living and paying the taxes are the only people that are going to be hurt by these wolves, which is the logger, the miner and the rancher. They aren’t going to help the ecosystem. Isn’t there a place in the ecosystem for man? Everybody says the circle has to be complete, but not one of these people has said man is in this circle. It’s just the wolf” (Sullivan, in McIntyre 1995: 394).

animals. This does not lead to the outright dismissal of care for domestic animals and many forms of wildlife, but it buttresses feelings that wolves are being given preferential treatment of which they are not worthy – a position that is reinforced, rather than challenged, by the potential economic disincentives of wolf reintroduction.⁵⁸ Supporting wolf reintroduction, in other words, subverts not only an economic order but God’s created order, in which humans maintain a position atop the creaturely pyramid. The accusation of wrongdoing, then, is based on the speaker’s perception that wolf supporters are disrupting an “animal order” established by God. That is, wolves are receiving inappropriate consideration: they are being inordinately “loved” in a way that offends God (and ranchers, among others).

Generally speaking, it can be argued that theism tends to, but must not absolutely, place ultimate value in what lies beyond the earthly realm. Thus, the “spiritual” tends to be that which transcends the flux of material conditions, and the importance of nonhuman animals is, hierarchically speaking, lower. However, theism need not necessarily direct focus “upward” *to the exclusion of* taking seriously the lives of other animals.⁵⁹ Bobbie Holaday’s comments underscore this well.

Holaday was an instrumental figure in organizing citizen support for wolf reintroduction in Arizona. In addition to founding Preserve Arizona’s Wolves (P.A.WS.), throughout the early 1990s she also organized events in Arizona that brought groups together to hash out their opinions about proposals for wolf reintroduction in the Southwest. In a conversation with me,

⁵⁸ For more about forms of a “pastoralist ethic,” land stewardship, and “mixed communities” as it pertains to ranching and care for livestock, see chapter five.

⁵⁹ Theistic language, of course, was widespread among nature preservationists and remains common among Americans who express concern for the environment. Rodger Schlickeisen, the president of Defenders of Wildlife, noted that Defenders’ poll results and public outreach indicated that support for wolf recovery is motivated by various reasons but that one of the most widespread was “to protect part of ‘God’s creation’” (2001: 63). See also Dizard (2001: 81), who cites several surveys, including one that listed nearly 80% of Americans agreeing with the statement “human beings should respect nature because it was created by God.”

Holaday described the importance of her religious faith in providing her with endurance during periods of uncertainty. Because she also expressed a sense of calling akin to a Hebrew prophet in her book *The Return of the Mexican Gray Wolf* (2003), I asked her if she might elaborate on this “calling.” She responded:

When I heard about the plight of the Mexican wolf ...I definitely felt, maybe this is something I have to do. And the more I thought about it, I knew it was something I had to do. ...Maybe I made a promise to a higher being, to God, that I’m going make this happen. ...I couldn’t have possibly done it alone. But it was more than just a notion or something I could give up as a passing fancy. It was an obligation that had to be fulfilled, and I still feel that way, that it was absolutely the right thing to do. I mean, these were God’s creatures, and they’d been mistreated and they deserved freedom, not to live their lives in pens and becoming some other creature than a wild wolf. Surely they’d never know about this human that had this feeling, but it was something that had to be done (12 June 2007, Phoenix, Arizona).

Holaday’s father was a northern Baptist minister who worked with Hopis in Arizona, and she attended a Baptist college, which she told me may partly explained this sense of duty or obligation to “God’s creatures.” In my interviews with other people concerned with wolf reintroductions in the Southwest, I had heard appeals to the Christian narrative of dominion as a reason to resist wolf reintroduction, so I asked Holaday what she thought about the notion of God giving dominion to humans. She responded:

I think He gave us power to [*pause*] yeah, dominion over them, but to do it in a righteous way, not to go in and make our human determinations of what’s good and evil [in an animal]. ...We’re putting a human attribute to the wolf, which lives according to nature, which I combine with religion, I mean, it’s all one to me. ... I just can’t see them as separate, myself. However we perceive of God, I don’t really think of God as the kindly, grey-haired old man. It’s a power, and if there is a higher power it has to combine nature, and good, and bad, and everything. What humans think is good or bad doesn’t necessarily go along with the Creator. I think we have to go beyond what is convenient for humans in thinking about how we deal with nature (12 June 2007, Phoenix, Arizona).

Here, Holaday approximates Robinson Jeffers’ understanding of the natural world as setting the terms for how God should be conceived: a power that combines “good, bad, and everything.”

Living “according to nature,” according to Holaday, is what the wolf does, and thus wolves offer

a critique of actions performed for human “convenience.” So, while expressing a form of theism, Holaday also embeds this theism in a narrative of “nature knows best.”

Take for example Holaday’s assertion which serves as the epigraph for this chapter: “What we did, as humans, because we had to get rid of the wolf upset everything that God had planned. Well, to me, God and Mother Nature are the same thing. It’s all one as far as I’m concerned. Whatever you want to call it, I think it all works together. I’m not a pagan, so I don’t pray to Mother Nature, but, I mean, to me it’s all one.” While denying “paganism” – minimally defined here as “praying to Mother Nature” (note the similarity to Robart’s “worship of the created”) – Holaday nevertheless expressed a type of pantheistic equivalency between God and “Mother Nature.”

Doug Bland, the pastor of Community Christian Church in Tempe, Arizona – who said he preferred the term panentheism to pantheism since it recognized God’s imminence in the natural world while maintaining the transcendence of the Holy – has nevertheless experienced accusations of paganism for venturing too close to the line distinguishing creature from Creator. Bland has been publicly supportive of wolf reintroduction and frequently preaches or writes about “creation care.” Following the publication of an article in the *Arizona Republic* that included a description of some of his work, Bland got a letter in the mail, which he read to me over the phone:

A guy named Fred wrote me and said – I used this in my sermon so I happen to have it handy – “Doug, I recently read of your false teachings in the *Arizona Republic*. What kind of pagan doctrine are you teaching your people? You are clearly going the way of the admittedly pagan Roman church in teaching this green gospel garbage, and all the other doctrine that you are falsely claiming comes from God’s word. I think you are merely teaching ‘another gospel,’ falsely leading others to worship the creature and the creation as written in Romans 1.25. Fred.” So I wrote back and said, “Dear Fred, consider the lilies of the valley [*a reference to Jesus’ teaching (Lk. 12.27) that God cares for all creation, even those creatures humans might consider unimportant*]. Sincerely, Doug (phone interview, 2 April 2008).

The differences between Robart and Holaday, and Doug Bland and “Fred,” invoke a larger clash of narratives about the natural world that are based on different assumptions about what it means to be human, and more particularly, how humans are situated in relation to other animals. In the case of Robart and Holaday, both assumed that humans exercise a form of dominion, but for Holaday this dominion was checked by the assumption that God/“Mother Nature” was the dwelling place of other animals with claims of their own that countered human “convenience.”

Wolf reintroductions, as these different perspectives reveal, serve to bring forth a logical corollary to human emplacement: what “place” do other animals have respective to humans? Unlike other endangered species, like snail darters or loach minnows, wolves, as a top-level predator, give this question a heightened significance. Their threat to domestic livestock – and the assertion that they also threaten human safety – puts the question of human and nonhuman relationships in bold relief. Who is “native” to place, and what stories support assertions of this proper order?

Holaday and Robart, of course, do not represent all the religious narratives that are woven into arguments for and against wolf reintroduction. They do, however, reveal a more pervasive conflict of “animal orders” common to discussions about endangered species reintroductions.

The Roots and the Shoots of a Religious Conflict

Where does the conflation of wolves, worshipping the created, and the ascription of paganism lead? Though it misrepresents those who support wolf recovery to huddle them together under the “pagan” umbrella, such a perception that “wolf lovers” are “pagans” highlights an important, if not fundamental, difference that cuts across the debate over wolves. What is being described is a conflict of religious perceptions and narratives between those who believe, on the one hand, that the distinction between humans and nonhumans is an insuperable

qualitative difference, and, on the other hand, those who believe that the differences are only a matter of degree.

Anna Peterson, in her exploration of lived and narrative environmental ethics, argued that ideas about human nature (what Peterson calls “anthropological assumptions”) are critical to the kinds of narratives people inherit and shape. Such anthropological assumptions allow the moral claims which people make “and their social, economic, and political consequences seem reasonable, natural, or right” because of their “coherence with a particular idea of the human” (2001: 3). Similarly, as Peterson also points out, arguments about nature are also arguments about what it means to be human. Both of these ideas (about humans and about nature) are assembled within larger narratives that meaningfully situate humans in relation to other animals:

For most people, values, priorities, and visions of what they ought to be and do and how their communities ought to look do not take the shape of abstract, formally stated maxims. More often they emerge from or remain implicit within a general notion of how the world is, what people are like, where we came from, and where we are headed, synthesized in narrative form (2001: 17).

In short, humans lead “storied” lives, operating with assumptions about how they fit within the cosmos and within their local landscapes. Often these stories remain implicit until, perhaps like cold and warm fronts colliding, they are challenged by alternative narratives.

The reintroduction of wolves highlights this collision of narratives, in which different groups assert different visions of humans and their relationships to and within the natural world. That there is resistance to wolf reintroduction is not a surprise, given the kinds of changes in land use that are required if wolves are truly to achieve functional, genetically diverse populations. What is of more interest – and what a scholar of religion might expect – is that dismissive claims about wolf recovery are sometimes framed as religious conflicts in which wolf advocates and opponents are viewed as wrongheaded for their beliefs.

For people who are against wolf reintroductions, the idea of going *backward*, reviving the presence of animals that were intentionally trapped, poisoned, and shot out of existence, constitutes a regressive plunge that de-civilizes the land and threatens to disrupt humans' position as nature's rightful manager. Moreover, suggesting that wolves may call for changes in human uses of land threatens the religious and cultural narratives that encourage (or are interpreted as encouraging) the idea of human dominion. Those who promote wolf recovery are thus perceived as agents of disruption, seeking to overturn this well-established narrative in favor of one that violates the work that was done to secure the land in the first place.

For others, however, this “new” narrative – an alternative story to human dominion – actually has deeper historical roots in North America than Western dominion narratives, and offers valuable alternatives to interacting with animals, while opening up spaces for critical assessment of Euro-American relationships to the natural world (see, for example, Pierotti and Wildcat 1999; Cheney and Weston 1999; Harrod 2000: xxv, 135-139; Berkes 1999: 163; Peterson 2001: 126; Grim 2006: 373; Harvey 2006: 186; Ingold 2006; Hornborg 2006). Despite changes in and to Amerindian cultures – such as the Cheyenne, as noted previously – animistic views continue to distinguish the social practices of many native Americans, “traditionalist” or otherwise, from more dominant Western religious and philosophical paradigms (see, for example, Deloria 1994; LaDuke 2005; Pickering and Jewell 2008). Certain native nations have closely identified with the historical persecution of wolves, and in some cases, have welcomed the reintroduction of wolves as a symbol of tribal strength.⁶⁰ The Nez Perce, for example,

⁶⁰ Rick McIntyre's edited volume *War Against the Wolf* (1995) highlighted many Native American writings that express this feeling of shared persecution (see, e.g., Iron Cloud 1995; Gladstone 1995; Marshall 1992). McIntyre himself did not shy from expressing his respect and admiration for Native views of wolves, nor from contrasting these views to the more hardened views of “white society” (1995: 254; cf. p. 471). In his conclusion, McIntyre suggested that a Native American prophecy regarding the return of wolves may be coming to fruition: “Our country's war against the wolf is now drawing to a close. We have learned, thanks in part to the example set by Native Americans, that we can coexist and share this continent with fellow species” (1995: 477).

became important partners with the FWS in the reintroduction of gray wolves to Idaho – complimenting the much-publicized Yellowstone reintroduction in the Northern Rockies.⁶¹ The U.S. Army’s pursuit of the Nez Perce, who nearly escaped to Canada under the leadership of Chief Joseph, lent itself to feelings of shared persecution with wolves, and prompted some tribal members to offer up the wolf as a “mirror for Indian people” that “suffered a similar fate” (Pinkham, in Pavlik 1999: 135). Levi Holt, who worked at the Wolf Education and Research Center on the reservation, argued that while losing a species like wolves hurts everyone, “the Nez Perce lose a bit more of their culture, of their spirituality, and most certainly of their treaty rights” (Nijhuis 2001).

Contrary to the prevalent Western notion that individual humans are discrete entities, constructions of personhood for many native Americans are dependent on relating with other-than-human persons. Equally important, however – and Harvey’s work is particularly helpful here – is that such perceptions are not confined to indigenous peoples. Both in and outside of the environmentalist milieu, for example, there are people who take seriously human obligations and responsibilities to other animals – people who may label themselves pagan, Christian, atheist, non-religious, or something else, but who nevertheless have adopted a kind of animistic view of the world.⁶² Understanding examples of animistic belief and practice explains why someone

⁶¹ The state legislature in Idaho barred the Idaho Fish and Game Department from cooperating with the federal wolf recovery program. As a sovereign nation with its own wildlife department, the Nez Perce tribe offered its services in 1995, which were accepted, something one writer called a “deliciously ironic opportunity” (Nijhuis 2001).

⁶² For historical overviews on the relationships between animistic perception and rituals, environmental concern, and various forms of religion and spirituality, particularly in the United States, see Taylor (2001a and 2001b); Taylor and Witt (2006); Taylor and Van Horn (2006). For a recent example of Christian exegesis that is animistic in tone and sympathetic to paganism, see Wallace (2005).

might be pejoratively labeled a “wolf lover” or “wolf hugger,” and why the recipient of the (supposed) slur might gratefully accept the label as fitting.⁶³

As with all cultural “stories,” one learns what it means to be human, over time and in relation to others, by both exclusion and inclusion. One of Harvey’s repeated and most salient arguments is that animism, like all religious lifeways, is learned. “Animism (minimally understood as the recognition of personhood in a range of human and other-than-human persons),” he writes,

is far from innate and instinctual. It is found more easily among elders who have thought about it than among children who still need to be taught how to do it. In learning to recognize personhood, animists are intended, by those who teach them (by whatever means) to become better, more respectful persons. That is, humans might become increasingly animist (reaching beyond the minimal definition) as throughout life they learn how to act respectfully (carefully and constructively) towards other persons (2006: 18; cf. pp.84, 151).

Considered in this way, being an animist is not conferred upon one as a birthright; it is learned and cultivated through experience, and generally, through the counsel of a person’s “elders.”⁶⁴ Harvey’s extension of the older use of the term – which was used in reference to “primitives” and their superstitious “survivals” in supposedly more developed religions – to encompass all

⁶³ Jack Gladstone, for example, a Blackfeet songwriter and storyteller, found that posters advertising his upcoming performances were defaced after he publicly supported the Yellowstone wolf reintroduction. The words “wolf lover” were written across his photograph. As McIntyre noted, however, “The label was intended to be an insult, but Jack took it as an honor to be considered a lover of wolves by enemies of the wolf” (1995: 267).

⁶⁴ Similar to Harvey, John Grim noted that personhood consists of “a relationality that is not only a given but also an achievement. The study of ritual in indigenous cultural contexts typically demonstrates how peoples work toward relatedness, especially in knowing animals” (2006: 380). The following, written by Manuel Iron Cloud, well articulates this learning process: “Growing up as an Oglala Lakota, one learns very early on in life that the Great Spirit, also known as the Creator, is most important in all things. To communicate with Him, whether it be through ritual, ceremony, or by conscious awareness throughout everyday life, is important to family and national unity. When growing up in this manner, one can comprehend the wholeness and the relationship of all things. As children, our first awareness is that of father and mother, and from there all other relationships come into focus. And in the course of everyday life, teaching and learning takes place, with most of it happening unconsciously. To hear stories of the Wolf, the Bear, the Eagle, or any other creature, is to hear of them, not as creatures lesser than ourselves, but as our equals, as relatives, as members of one family much larger than our intellects can comprehend. So we just accept that the Creator knows the origin and the outcome of all things, and that it is our duty to seek out ways of living together in a way that is good for all peoples” (Iron Cloud 1995: 261).

peoples who participate in networks of relationships that must be negotiated carefully, is a helpful way of understanding animist perceptions in Native and non-Native cultures alike.⁶⁵ From this perspective, people who define themselves as an adherent to a particular religious tradition may still be classified as animists: those who believe that the world is alive with living agents, and who seek to acknowledge, react to, and foster relational ties between themselves and these other-than-human persons.

* * *

Perhaps the contestation over wolves can be more easily conceptualized if a visual metaphor is employed; eschewing fauna in favor of flora, one could think of this debate in terms of a large tree. I have described some of the deep “roots” of the religious conflict that twist through the debate about wolf reintroductions – conflicts that are based in the differences between animistic perceptions and forms of theism in which humans are set apart qualitatively from other animals. Like the roots of a tree, there are overlaps between these categories, times when the roots twist around one another and even merge, as with Bobbie Holaday’s description of the equivalency between Mother Nature and God, or Bruce Babbitt’s claim that there is space enough in “God’s creation” for everyone (including wolves) to “live in harmony.”

In preparation for what will receive further attention in subsequent chapters, I would like to briefly describe the “shoots,” that is, the above-the-surface limbs, branches and individual leaves that draw on these roots for sustenance. These “shoots” consist of the kinds of public rhetoric used to speak about wolves, the sorts of visual images people use to express their feelings about

⁶⁵ Something I do not explore in depth, but which may be of interest to the reader, is the reclaiming of “animism” outside of academic contexts in the late twentieth century (for examples, in addition to Harvey 2006, see Snyder, in Taylor 1995: 114; Quinn 2005; Taylor, forthcoming 2009). Such efforts to reverse the negative connotations associated with animism bear affinities with other word-reclaimings, like the use and embrace of “paganism” (Hutton 1999). In both cases, practitioners frequently describe a “purer” form of religious practice that preceded the supposedly corruptive forces of Abrahamic religions, or “world” religions more generally.

wolves, and, of course, the kinds of actions that people take within the landscape that are intended to include or exclude wolves.

Though there are more groups that could be analyzed, there are three primary “actors” in the debate about wolves: the federal and state government agencies and biologists responsible for wolf recovery, livestock producers and rural persons concerned with access to and use of public lands, and environmentalists of various kinds. Within these three groups there are different scales of interest (for example, “official” institutional positions that individuals may feel pressured to adhere to despite their personal convictions), and though “ideal types” are never comprehensive, generally these groups tell three different stories about wolf reintroduction.

Among these three groups, I suggest that there is a fundamental conflict over “animal orders” that depend on “placement narratives,” that is, claims and counter-claims that assert who can truly be considered “native” to the Southwestern landscape. Along with Thomas Tweed (2006: 63-64), one may want to think of such placement narratives as informed by religious “flows” that move dynamically through time and space. That is, different groups draw from memories of the past (history) in order to enact, or attempt to enact, these memories in place (geographically). Placement narratives in the Southwest are complicated by issues related to such historical and geographical “flows,” especially as this manifests in arguments over proximity to the land.

For example, ranchers often claim that the federal government has a less powerful claim to lands than they do. Much uncertainty is expressed about the ability of federal biologists (and, likewise, state biologists) to truly know the land in the same way that locals do. Suspicion of “textbook” land management, as opposed to local knowledge and length of residency, is often used to bolster this position. Similarly, in relation to proximity, people near reintroduction sites

often claim that environmentalists are urban elitists (New York and California seem to be the most frequently cited locations) who have no idea what it means to deal with actual wolves. In contrast, environmentalists look at residency in longer time frames, for, they claim, if ranchers have been in the Southwest for a few generations, then wolves were there for a few hundred. According to this view, the “natives” are wolves not ranchers, nor especially perhaps their domestic livestock. State and federal wildlife managers must negotiate these various claims, and rely largely on scientific narratives (e.g., evolutionary ecology) and policy narratives (e.g., “multiple use”) for their authority to do so. Among all the different groups, “placement narratives” legitimate divergent claims about who does and who does not belong in the landscape. These narratives are not inert stories; they are enacted. To use religious terminology, they are a contested *consecration* of space (see Tweed 2006: 74-75), marking the lines – some imaginative, some real – between who is “in” and who is “out.”

Eradicating wolves, though difficult, may prove far easier than bringing them back, and many persons with whom I spoke (both pro- and anti-wolf) expressed doubts about the future of the Mexican gray wolf program. Killing wolves in the Southwest was an expression of cultural values that most people in the United States accepted or to which they saw no reason to object, even and perhaps especially among the most scientifically minded of the era. Many persons have changed their views about the role of predation, but among local residents – some of whom have family members who helped clear the last wolves out – the suggestion of reintroducing wolves uncorks a whole set of values that may have been bottled up for a time but never disappeared. The turnaround time – from killing wolves to reintroducing them – was too short for that to happen. Yet a review of the literature suggests, and my conversations with livestock producers confirms, that for those who are against reintroduction, the offending parties are not

primarily wolves, who are considered symptomatic of a larger intrusion. An order is being overturned that threatens their communities and livelihoods, as well as their determination of what values should be ascribed to wolves.

Alternatively, those who value wolves differently, and who may express animistic understandings of interdependence when doing so, are calling for an order in which predator animals like wolves are included as valued members of a more-than-human community. There is an important difference, however, between the contemporary social contexts within which animistic views are formed and the ones that commonly persisted in the past. Small-scale hunting-gathering groups are no longer a social possibility in the United States, and those who practice forms of animism and think animistically no longer rely on the same rituals as, say, the Cheyenne once did. Relating to wolves imaginatively is one thing; relating to them particularly, through long-term co-existence is another. One of the allures of wolves, as described particularly in the next chapter, is their “wildness,” and their exoticism as an endangered and charismatic species is sometimes elevated in ways that ignore what it might mean to actually live in proximity to them. Those in urban areas, by default, may find themselves exempt from the messy problems that set the real apart from the ideal. In light of such potential disconnect, evolutionary biologist Raymond Pierotti and social scientist Daniel Wildcat, two Native American scholars, offered the following caution:

Living with nature has little to do with the often voiced “love of nature,” “closeness to nature,” or desire “to commune with nature” one hears today. Living with nature is very different from “conservation” of nature. Those who wish to “conserve” nature still feel that they are in control of nature, and that nature should be conserved only insofar as it benefits humans, either economically or spiritually. It is crucial to realize that nature exists on its own terms, and that non-humans have their own reasons for existence, independent of human interpretations. ...Those who desire to dance with wolves must first learn to live with wolves (Pierotti and Wildcat 1999: 192-193).

In the effort to live with wolves, to reintroduce them to landscapes from which they have been eradicated, wolf recovery has an implicit, and sometimes explicit, religious dimension, expressing an interdependent “order” that defies hard-and-fast boundaries between humans and everything else. To understand the “shoots” of the conflict of “animal orders,” that is, how various groups and individuals understand and seek to activate their values (consciously or unconsciously) upon the landscape, and to do any justice to the contextual particularities of wolf reintroduction, we must draw in closer to the branches of our metaphorical tree. This is the aim of subsequent chapters, which focus on the reintroduction of wolves to the southwestern United States, as well as the kinds of emerging negotiations, partnerships, and further retrenchments that have occurred among stakeholders who are in the process of working out divergent “animal orders” on the ground.

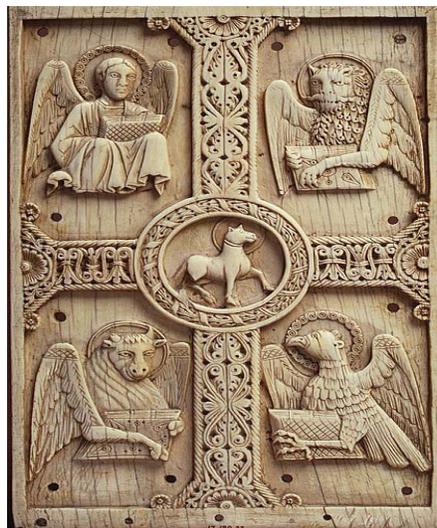


Figure 2-1. Plaque, South Italian (perhaps Benevento), 975-1000, *Plaque with Agnus Dei on a Cross between Emblems of the Four Evangelists*. Located in the center of the traditional symbols for the four gospels (see Ezek. 1.5, 10; Rev. 4.6-7) – Matthew (divinized human), Mark (lion), Luke (ox), and John (eagle) – is the most popular animal icon for Jesus, the lamb. (Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 [17.190.38] Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art)



Figure 2-2. Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664), *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God), ca. 1636-1640. Jesus as God's lamb, a humble and willing sacrificial figure of cosmic atonement. (Courtesy of the San Diego Museum of Art [Gift of Anne R. and Amy Putnam])



Figure 2-3. *The Good Shepherd*. Detail of an early Christian sarcophagus, S. Francesco, Urbino, Italy. (Photo credit: Scala / Art Resource, NY)



Figure 2-4. *The Good Shepherd*, Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church, Gainesville, FL. (Photograph by Gavin Van Horn)



Figure 2-5. Edward Hicks, *Peaceable Kingdom*, ca. 1848. (Courtesy of Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, James G. Forsyth Fund, 1940)

CHAPTER 3
POSTERWOLVES: CONSTRUCTING AND CONSTRICTING A WILDERNESS ICON

Introduction: Wolf Terrorists and Wolf Superstars

Just weeks before the October 2004 election, voters were presented with a presidentially approved advertisement that was notable for its use of animal imagery. The advertisement opened with a bird's-eye view of dense woods, then quickly cut to a series of images with wolves shifting furtively in the undergrowth, as a female voice-over intoned, "In an increasingly dangerous world, even after the first terrorist attack on America, John Kerry and the liberals in Congress voted to slash America's intelligence operations ..." The penultimate camera shot – before President George W. Bush was shown on the phone giving his approval for the advertisement – included a group of wolves at the forest's edge, who rose and moved toward the viewer while the disembodied voice concluded, "And weakness attracts those who are waiting to do America harm."¹

This bit of campaign propaganda drew on some longstanding stereotypes of wolves in order to evoke a loose connection between the threat of terrorism and predator animals. The implication was that President Bush would keep these menacing forces at bay while his opponent would further undermine the United States' ability to repel such forces. Though this advertisement did not break the mold in utilizing animal imagery, which is widespread in commercial advertising in all media formats, it was problematic in its assumption that wolf symbols were unambiguous.²

¹ To view the advertisement, see: <http://www.factcheck.org/article291.html> (accessed 7 February 2008).

² For a fine sample of animal imagery and its use to caricature "the enemy" while glorifying the "good guys," especially in wartime poster propaganda, see Baker (2001: 33-48). But as to the problematic contemporary usage of animals as national symbols, see Baker (2001: 56-62). For iconic material artifacts in American civil religion, particularly in relation to "othering," see Morgan (2005: 240-244). It is, of course, possible that the persons responsible for the "Wolves" advertisement were shrewder than I have credited them here. Perhaps there was no concern with alienating voters who they supposed were already outside of their reach (e.g., environmentalists who

Indeed, the advertisement ran aground on the very different feelings that some people had toward wolves at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It would seem that the “common-sense consciousness,” as critical studies scholar Steve Baker called various animal stereotypes that are culturally widespread, was no longer commonsensical.³ Defenders of Wildlife president Rodger Schlickeisen, for example, responded with a rejoinder on the day the advertisement was released. He called particular attention to proposed amendments that would weaken endangered species protections, as well as other “anti-wolf” actions of the administration, commenting: “How ironic for George Bush, who has been the most anti-wildlife president ever, to turn to the very symbol of endangered wildlife in America – the wolf – for assistance in perpetuating his administration” (Schlickeisen 2004).

The advertisement created some cognitive dissonance for others as well, since the relationship between the present meanings assigned to wolves and the meanings commonly associated with them in the past were at odds. Clarissa Pinkola Estés, a Jungian analyst who grew up close to wolves in the northern Midwest and wrote her own psychological commentary on human-wolf connections in *Women Who Run with the Wolves* (1996), objected that “the commercial makers vilified a creature who has, in reality, such companionability, such family values, such a conserving way of life” (2005: 91). For Estés, wolves were “timid angels” as well as psychic metaphors, and their persecution and continued malignment represented “that wildlife

might support wolf reintroduction); or, the rhetoric was intended to appeal primarily to those that equated wolf reintroduction with intrusive government policies in land management. In such a case, the advertisement would reach its “target audience,” though my observation that the advertisement was more controversial generally than would have been possible just a handful of decades ago remains relevant.

³ Baker, drawing on Clifford Geertz’s essay “Common Sense as a Cultural System,” provides an excellent overview of how common sense operates to naturalize contradictions in animal imagery (e.g., the smiling visage of a cow or pig beckoning people inside a butcher shop), something he referred to as “perverse normality” (2001: 170-174). According to Baker, this is a common form of cultural “trivialization” of the animal, in which the animal is rendered stupid, silly, or visually stereotyped, and therefore invisible as a being worthy of ethical consideration or prolonged attention.

and the wild soul are both endangered species in our time” (2005: 92). Estés’s views are corroborated by a proliferation of wolf imagery in various popular contexts – from websites to greeting cards to decorative plates – much of which depicts wolves in the halo of mystical or shamanistic symbols or highlights their “nativeness” (See figs. 3-1 to 3-4).

Conservationist Rob Edward felt that the ad was a “cheap shot” (2005: 170). Questioning the “Orwellian overtones” of the advertisement, Edward appealed to the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park in 1995 as evidence for the salutary ecological role that wolves played as “cornerstones of the land’s well-being” (2005: 173). Expressing hope for the reintroduction of wolves to the Southern Rockies, Edward wrote of his longing for the howls which would vindicate his efforts and signal that this region had not lost its wildness: “The pulse of the land seems feeble in the silence. Still, the wild heart beats steadily, anticipating the refrain” (2005: 175).

Had this advertisement been aired during Dwight Eisenhower’s campaign, when television first became a popular medium for presidential advertisements, it would have raised few eyebrows. However, in the span of fifty years, the status and iconographic significance of wolves had changed dramatically, making this advertisement objectionable for many persons. Relying upon wolves to symbolically embody the threat of terrorism was no longer as simple as it was in the past, when popular deviant labels for wolves included terms like “outlaws,” “bootleggers,” “cattle rustlers,” or low-caste “varmints.”⁴

By way of contrast, a very different image of a wolf achieved some notoriety, when in January 1998 a snapshot was taken just after the release of three wolves into the Apache National Forest of eastern Arizona, initiating the federal reintroduction of Mexican gray wolves (See Fig.

⁴ For examples of the different negative labels applied to wolves, see Lopez ([1978] 2004: 137-199); Robinson (2005: 150-162); and Worster (1994: 258-290).

3-5).⁵ For those who supported reintroduction efforts, the wolf in this photo – tellingly called the “posterwolf” of Southwestern reintroduction because of the wide distribution and popularity of the photograph – represented the fruits of a decades-long effort to put back in place one of the native pieces of a larger ecological puzzle.⁶

Knowing the context of the photograph adds to its symbolic weight. Pictured is one of the first Mexican gray wolves (*Canis lupus baileyi*) released from captivity after this subspecies of gray wolf had come perilously close to extinction in the late 1970s.⁷ Trish Stevenson, the granddaughter of renowned ecologist Aldo Leopold, was present for the release of the wolf in this photograph, and her remarks echo a pervasive view among many who advocate for wolf recovery.⁸ “It was the land of his first job,” Stevenson said to the small crowd, referring to

⁵ This image has graced US Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS) literature and Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) brochures on wolf reintroduction in the Southwest, as well as the pamphlets of some wildlife advocacy groups. See, for example, the FWS welcome page for Mexican wolf recovery (Online: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/> [accessed 23 April 2007]) and the cover of their brochure entitled “Mexican Gray Wolf: Restoration in the Southwest” (2004); the AGFD’s Mexican wolf reintroduction and management webpage (Online: http://www.azgfd.gov/w_c/es/wolf_reintroduction.shtml [accessed 23 April 2007]); the Blue Range Primitive Area topographic map, produced by the US Forest Service (1998); and the cover of the Southern Rockies Wolf Restoration Project’s tri-fold pamphlet “Restore the Balance, Return the Wolf!” (2000; distributed by the Colorado-based, wildlife conservation group Sinapu).

⁶ For comments on the “posterwolf” moniker, see Taugher 1999 and Holaday 2003: 142. Number 511, affectionately named Brunhilda (vars. Brunnhilde, Brynhildr; a powerful warrior in Norse mythology) by some, was by early 2005 the last wild survivor of the wolves initially released in 1998 (Baird 2005). Interestingly, considering her role as the “symbol for Mexican wolf recovery” and her success in whelping seven litters of pups over the span of her life, she died in a captive management facility of heat exhaustion in July 2005, following her capture for cattle depredation (FWS 2005), typifying both the limited successes and manifold difficulties of Mexican wolf reintroduction.

⁷ Except for five Mexican wolves who were captured between 1977-1980 (perhaps ironically by government-hired trapper Roy McBride, who was one of the most skilled wolf hunters throughout the mid-twentieth century), Mexican gray wolves were believed to have been completely exterminated from the wild by the time wolves were released in 1998, and likely long before, existing only in fragmented populations in Mexico (FWS 1996: 1.5-1.6). The captive breeding program began in the late 1970s (the first official litter was born in 1978), with the knowledge that preserving genetic diversity would be critical to any future chances Mexican wolves might have in the wild. While the captive population steadily grew during the 1980s and 1990s, a halting process of government research and political wrangling began in order to identify suitable areas for reintroduction as mandated by the Endangered Species Act (1973). Though recommendations were offered by a recovery team as early as 1982, it was not until 1998 that Mexican wolves were released into the wild. See chap. 4 for a fuller history of this process.

⁸ As might be expected, Stevenson’s participation as a representative of the Leopold family was symbolically important. According to David Parsons, the first FWS Mexican wolf recovery coordinator: “We [the recovery team] had to have a Leopold family representative. We went out and recruited. His children were too old for the walk

Leopold's early work as a forester in the Blue Range. More important than Leopold's professional location, however, it was also the place where, "The mountain and the wolf showed him something new, that the Earth is here not only for the use of people, but also that the Earth is a whole organism. ...The wolf reintroduction program is part of rebuilding the organism" (in Moody [1998] 2005: 166).⁹

There is another possible reason that #511 became the "posterwolf" of Southwestern reintroduction, something beyond her seemingly casual gaze and poised appearance. The photograph captures her facing the camera, staring into the lens or perhaps even the eyes of the photographer. Eye contact between humans and animals is something that is a frequent photographic and film motif, and has been interpreted in alternate ways, from alienation to a "social contract" of moral engagement (Burt 2001: 38-54). At least some filmmakers, like wildlife documentary director David Attenborough, believe that a glance exchanged between humans and other animals can be an entry point for humans to imaginatively consider the world from the perspective of another animal (Burt 2001: 45).

Eye contact is also common in religious icons, in which the face of a holy person engages the viewer, maybe even "following" the viewer when he or she is not directly in front of the icon.¹⁰ The symbolic engagement established through the eyes, which invites reflection on the

with a wolf crate or even to make the trip, so we got the grand daughter" (interview, 16 July 2007, Albuquerque, NM).

⁹ In a more theistic framing, though with the same sort of emphasis on the recovery of a proper order that Stephenson expressed, Bobbie Holaday (see chap. 2) described the moment as "one of those times when you just want to exclaim, 'God's in His Heaven; all's right with the world'" (2003: 128; cf. xvi).

¹⁰ From an Orthodox Christian perspective, Leonid Ouspensky observed of icons of the saints that "the icon does not cut itself off from the world ... [which is] emphasized by the fact that saints are usually represented turned towards the congregation, either full-face or three-quarters. ...In a certain sense the profile breaks communion, it is already the beginning of absence" (1969: 40). For an ecological interpretation of the natural world as icon from an Orthodox Christian perspective, see Chryssavgis (2000). One may also consider parallels with the Hindu experience of darśan, the auspicious ritual practice of direct eye contact with the god through the eyes of an icon, or the divine "seeing" of holy places or persons (Eck 1998).

saint as well as introspection, is an artistic technique that likely has a biological basis. Both wolves and humans communicate a good deal with their eyes, but humans in particular rely on vision to communicate among themselves and, to some degree, with other species.¹¹ The biological similarity between human and wolf eyes has even led some cultures to express this similarity through myth, such as the Bella Coola people of the Pacific Northwest, for whom wolves' eyes are evidence of a shaman's failed attempt to turn wolves into humans (Grambo 2005: 116).

Of course, the response of a viewer to an image or an icon, such as the so-called "posterwolf" of Southwestern reintroduction, and whether that person feels morally compelled to act in a certain manner because of his or her attention to it, cannot be predicted with any kind of certainty absent a knowledge of the viewer's personal background. Yet one of the reasons for the photograph's popularity may have been that it offered the opportunity for this kind of mutual gaze. A wolf's gaze, as Stephenson indicated in her comments and which I detail later, also played a critical role in Aldo Leopold's encounter with a dying mother wolf's "green fire." This story is no doubt well remembered, in part, for this transformative exchange that was predicated on interspecies eye contact.¹²

¹¹ For the evolution of binocular vision and reflections on interspecies eye contact, see "The Eye" in Shepard (1996a: 1-20). For information on how wolves use their eyes to communicate, as well as other body language, see Harrington and Asa (2003).

¹² Others have expressed similar feelings of deep communication with wolves because of their eyes. See, for example, Watson in Manes (1990: 109-110); Fox ([1980] 1992: 6-10); Aumack (2005: 12). Aumack's comments are a notable example of the very different qualities that wolves signified at the beginning of the twenty-first century: "I first encountered a wolf face to face in the wild just after dusk on a small island off the central coast of British Columbia. I had viewed wolves from a distance and had most definitely felt their howls through my travels, but I had not yet had one stare me down. As we peered out with wide eyes from our tent, the wolf walked slowly and deliberately through our camp, and I felt a sense of shared dignity, solemn remembrance and responsibility. Her very presence brought dignity to the wildness surrounding us" (2005: 12). Leyton Cougar, director of the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary, described to me various powerful experiences people have had with the captive wolves that he cares for, including exchanges of eye contact. In contrast to the experiences cited above, though, Cougar expressed his take on the challenges eye contact with wolves may evoke: "When a wolf looks at you in the eye, that's a different experience. For one, they hardly ever do it, but when they do what's going on? I think... that one

The Bush “Wolves” advertisement and the “posterwolf” of Southwestern wolf reintroduction call attention to the multiple and contradictory images of animals that continue to be presented to the American public. Wolves have been a critical species for representing a host of conflicting claims about human relationships to the lands of the United States, serving as the “other” to be reviled or championed – an icon of threat/disorder or beauty/order. I argue that at stake in the competing iconographic significance of wolves is the construction and reconstruction of human identity in relation to the larger biotic community. To put it broadly but bluntly: wolves have been an influential species for human understandings of animality – both in reference to nonhuman animals and to what is regarded as the “animal” part of human beings. Conceived negatively, this understanding of animality has been used to condemn wolves while legitimating human control. More recently, however, such animality has been conceptualized favorably and wolves have been looked to as beacons of the “wild” spirit that humans have forsaken in their rush to tame the forces that sustain biotic processes. Understanding the historical contexts that made these different meanings possible can shed light on the ways in which people continue to utilize other animals, especially large predator animals like wolves, to express their sense of the proper place of humans in relation to the natural world.

Wolf Iconography: Studying Animal Images and the Human Imagination

*The representation is one thing, and that which it represents is another.*¹³

of the reasons men want to kill wolves is that they see our soul. Men, in particular, don't really want that to be seen. It's something that we hide. We don't really want people knowing what's going on in here. Not every man, but when you go down south [to Catron County] and you're talking to ranchers that are wolf haters, I think that part of that is, is that the wolf sees your soul. They see who we truly are and that makes you feel a little bit naked and if you're naked, you're vulnerable. I think that's somehow a concept of their spirit and the way they touch people” (interview, 14 July 2007, Ramah, New Mexico). For more about the religiously transformative impacts of interspecies eye contact, see Taylor (forthcoming 2009).

¹³ St. John of Damascus, 3rd Discourse in Defense of the Holy Icons, quoted in Ouspensky and Lossky (1969: 34).

Images of animals, and the narratives and various experiential associations attached to them, are often powerful tools to advertise allegiance and affirm a sense of moral territory, and may collectively contribute to an iconic role for any given animal: a means for people to think about their lives and communities, ostensibly with greater precision and clarity.¹⁴ Similar to the way a religious icon directs and focuses an adherent's attention, aiding the viewer in contemplating something beyond the icon itself, so too have wolves become an icon for many persons, representing much more than the animals themselves.¹⁵ For wilderness advocates and many environmentalists, wolves focus attention on the need to protect and preserve habitat that is dwindling due to ongoing development. For conservation biologists and some other concerned scientists, wolves have been tagged as a "strongly interactive species," a critical, top-level predator that contributes to overall ecosystem resiliency and functionality. For livestock ranchers and others whose livelihoods depend upon lands that may be adversely affected by the presence of wolves, wolves are oftentimes an icon of governmental pressure and control gone awry. In each of these ways, and others, the presence (or threat of the potential presence) of wolves in the American landscape continues to represent a host of competing values that vie for attention in the public realm.

The term *icon* is here used in a general and not a restrictive (or "traditional") sense.¹⁶ Though it would no doubt be fruitful to look at examples of wolf "icons" in contexts that are

¹⁴ See especially David Morgan's chapter "Defining Visual Culture" (in Morgan 2005), which provides a nice overview of the scholarly twists and turns of visual studies, as well as his emphasis on the practice of seeing ("the ocular dimension of religion") as socially constructed though not reducible to such constructions.

¹⁵ The term *icon* is occasionally used in literature about wolves (e.g., Grambo 2005; Coleman 2004; Mech and Boitani 2003: xv), though typically without sustained reflection about the term's connotations.

¹⁶ By traditional, I mean interpretations of icons in contradistinction to secular art, which set icons apart in a sacred category all their own (see, e.g., Ouspensky and Lossky 1969: 32, 42-45). Particularly for Orthodox Christians, icons are associated with a theology of Jesus' incarnation; that is, the revelation of God-as-human confirms the sacred value of the created world inasmuch as it mediates the invisible presence of the divine.

commonly regarded as “religious” spaces, e.g., medieval bestiaries, stained glass windows, church or catacomb frescoes, marginal illustrations in bibles, etc., my concern is with what I take to be the iconic *function* of wolves. I am interested in the “religious work” of popular wolf iconography in “forging community, focusing desire, and facilitating exchange,” as David Chidester characterized the functions of religious activity in American popular culture (Chidester 2005a: 5).

Chidester also provided a helpful definition of icons that I will rely upon: icons, he stated, are ordinary objects that are nonetheless transformed into “extraordinary magnets of meaning with a religious cast ... [for which] the term *religion* seems appropriate because it signals a certain quality of attention, desire, and even reverence for sacred materiality” (2005a: 34). Indeed, the profound emotions and imaginative associations that wolves stir for many Americans make their images significant “magnets of meaning.” I suggest that there are three primary reasons that the term *icon* is a valuable referent for spotlighting the significance of wolves in the public imagination. First, the term is heuristically valuable for analyzing the ways in which wolves function as a source and lure of meaning for various constituencies, particularly in focusing peoples’ attention on issues beyond wolves’ immediate physical presence (e.g., land management, government intervention, ethical obligations to non-domestic species). Moreover, the term captures the religious or quasi-religious qualities that people attribute to wolves, based upon valuations of wolves either as a species of sacred value (often tied to understandings of “nativism”) or as a profane species (a “deviant misfit” with nefarious intention). Finally, as the title of this chapter indicates, wolves have consistently been associated with the notion of wilderness, and oftentimes serve as an icon of “wildness” along with its many extra-ordinary connotations such as freedom, authenticity, and untamed spirit.

The controversial status of wolves is embedded in a rich and significant shift in public perceptions of animals in America, particularly predator animals that were and are believed to pose a threat to human interests. Once one of the most vilified animals in North America (their association with thievery, cunning, malfeasance, and bloodlust led to their near eradication from the continental United States), during the latter decades of the twentieth century wolves came to be valued by many as a signifier of ecological holism and as the paradigmatic symbol of wilderness.¹⁷ This iconographic significance is far from settled, but by observing in what ways various groups of people have selectively narrowed the way in which wolves *should* be perceived, we gain perspective about how a number of people in the United States conceive of their relationships to animal “others” and to the lands that together they (attempt to) co-inhabit.¹⁸

Destroying and Deploying Icons

The iconic pedigree of wolves has deep historical roots. From the colonial period until the early twentieth century, wilderness, wolves, and beastliness formed an unholy symbolic triumvirate that reinforced the colonizing and domesticating mission of early European settlers.

¹⁷ Some scholars have argued that wilderness is a dangerous term, which creates socially oppressive or romantic dualisms linked to notions of human absence (Guha 1989; see also Cronon’s influential essay [1995], in which he worried about the fetishization of sublime natural areas to the detriment of honoring the wild in all types of spaces). Others believe that the term is apt since it evokes a sense of the proper humility required of humans who enter into biodiverse or sacred spaces that are relatively free of human impacts (Nash 2001; Foreman 2004). Still others distinguish between wilderness areas and the quality of wildness that is associated with them (Snyder 1990; Turner 1999; Shepard 1998: 131-151). For edited volumes that provide detailed attention to these debates, see Soulé and Lease (1995), and Callicott and Nelson (1998). In my view, the term remains valuable because many people continue to use it in popular contexts to denote areas that they consider to be exceptional, whether for ecological or spiritual reasons, or both.

¹⁸ Wolves, like humans, are entwined in a network of relationships, only one of which has to do with our narrative and visual discourses about them. Though all experiences of wolves are mediated by cultural context and individual experience, wolves are obviously not *mere images* nor are they fated to be bound by visual or narrative stereotypes – even if we receive a good deal of information about them through various media. Animals have agency that should not be ignored, even if – and perhaps because – we, as humans, are constantly re-interpreting the meanings of that agency. See Waldau (2006), who discusses the “eminently human challenge” of accessing “nonhuman realities,” and Ingram (2000), who draws on philosopher Kate Soper’s position of “critical realism” to argue that there is a non-human nature that remains external to any human discourses about it, and that “some social constructions of animal ethology are more accurate than others” (2000: x, 71-72).

This negative symbolism served as a rationale for the colonists' claims to North American lands as they bracketed these dangerous forces from settled areas. Forced to dwell beyond the boundaries of cultivated lands, wolves became transgressors when they crossed the lines meant to keep them "in their place," threatening human dominance, security, property, and domestic animals valued for their utility. The transgression could go the other way, too: some believed humans could slip back into a degenerate, wild condition, corrupted by the wilderness and its savage inhabitants.¹⁹ As the savage "other," wolves were thus fated to remain, both ideologically and physically, largely on the other side of what was considered acceptable behavior, even as other animals began to receive attention as subjects of benevolent religious and ethical concern beginning in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁰

In the first decades of the twentieth century, under the influence of Western livestock ranchers and increasing federal power in Western land management, the bureaucratization of eradication efforts proved devastating to wolves. While bounty systems were prone to fraudulent claims and allowed surviving wolves to repopulate areas from which they were eliminated, federal involvement proved to be a much more efficient means of reaching the desired goals of "intensive organized effort until the last animal is taken" (Ligon, in Brown 2002: 63).²¹ As early

¹⁹ For the connection between human "savagery" and wolf-like behavior in colonial times, see Coleman (2004: 31-32, 59, 62); and Albanese (1990: 34-35). For a philosophical treatment of the "beast within," and this concept's relationship to wolves, see Midgley ([1978] 1995: 36-44).

²⁰ Protection for animal species in the United States, in general, was a process of gradual extension that radiated outward from urban dwellings: first to domestic animals, later to certain aesthetically-pleasing birds, then to larger charismatic mammals (Mighetto 1991, Dunlap 1988; cf. Thomas 1996). The wolf, however, would have to wait to receive such moral consideration. The first organizations in the United States that lobbied for animal protections, such as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, were focused primarily on the humane treatment of domestic and draft animals. Additional humanitarian causes included: animals used for entertainment (zoos and circuses); antivivisection; trapping; fashions considered unethical (such as fur and the millinery trade); and vegetarianism.

²¹ For how this relates to the Progressive political movement, as a social and moral campaign, see Worster (1994: 262-274).

as 1907, the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey (USBS) provided pamphlets for distribution that detailed more effective ways to kill wolves; by 1915, the USBS acquired Congressional funding and responsibility for the task; by 1928, five hundred men were employed by the USBS for predator control.²²

With dramatic license that well reflects the ideological milieu of that time, in 1922 the *Rocky Mountain News* described this government-sponsored mission against wolves and other wild animals in Manichean terms, an ultimate contest between good and evil:

NOT YET is the wilderness won. Grim, relentless, trammeled, yet untamed, the spirit of nature battles against encroaching civilization. . . .Mighty in its untutored majesty is the out-of-doors, but mightier is man. . . .Man's progress is ever onward, forward. He is impeded, never stopped.

The history of civilization is written in terms of its struggle against enemies. Thru immemorial aeons there have been forces to contend against – forces which have threatened at times to overcome even the ever-conquering deity which is the spirit of man (in Robinson 2005a: 157-158).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the fate of wolves was yoked to a larger national project to make the United States secure for domestic animals, safe for domestic crops, and well-stocked with the maximum number of desirable game species. Ideas about American “progress” demanded enmeshment to hold weight as slogans, however, and wolves’ bodies were used to visually illustrate an achievement that still remained uncertain. The displacement and then display of wolf carcasses, among those of other predators, offered a measure of visual confirmation of the conquest over the “untamed” and the “uncivilized,” insinuating that if indeed the wilderness was “not yet won,” then the wait would not be long (see figs. 3-6, 3-7).

²² For an excellent historical study of the links between federal involvement and livestock associations of the West, and a detailed portrait of Stanley Young, the most influential early leader of the USBS, see Robinson (2005). Young (with co-author Arthur Carhart) penned some of the final “last stands” of the wolves that were brought to justice on his watch. Though traces of regret can be found in his writing, what he believed to be economically desirable ultimately trumped his occasionally more generous assessments of wolves, and he remained convinced that the wolf was “one hundred percent criminal” (Young, in Worster 1994: 277).

As an icon of wilderness, wolves were the savage “other” that defied, by their very presence, the ambition to remake the American landscape entirely in conformity to human interests. At stake, as the plaque on the back wall of the predator exhibit indicates, was the “control” of the land and notions of human identity as nature’s rightful manager; and the operative word is repeated in case the viewer had any doubts: “Conservation, Utilization and Control of Wildlife. Control.” The “defeat” of wolves was thus a victory for a selective view of human progress and superiority, operating under the assumption that wolves and humans were incompatible species. The diminishing but “untamed” powers that wolves represented were a roadblock for a nation determined to maximize its natural resources while affirming its claims to human dominance.

Significantly, the latter photograph (Fig. 3-7), taken during the waning stages of wolf eradication efforts, openly links wolf (and coyote) deaths with another American icon: the automobile. The car, with its various associations of speed, convenience, and the “progress” of roads into areas that at one time offered only limited access to the public, here serves also as a trophy display of those animals that stood in the way of such “civilized” amenities.

These photographs, and numerous others like them, offered visual confirmation of the defeat of one icon (wolves/wilderness/nature) and its replacement by another (car/civilization/culture). Visual culture scholar David Morgan provides a helpful term for identifying such ritualized displays: “soft iconoclasm,” an act or series of acts in which “the image is not physically destroyed but redeployed as an example of a new and decidedly negative taxonomic classification” (2005: 129). Though writing about the context of colonial Peru, Morgan makes a point about iconoclasm that holds for those who sought to “win the West”:

The idea was to mount a spectacle, a theatrical staging of violence that would enact an ideological transfiguration of the past. ...It was an effective, memorable, and brutal means

of publicly dethroning one image or symbol and replacing it with another. As such violence marked the end or death of one regime and heralded the triumph of a new order (2005: 123-24).

The replacement of native fauna with domestic stock in the West was never a fait accompli; it was an act of “soft iconoclasm” that required continuous exertion. By hanging the skins of wolves on fences, displaying them in government-sponsored dioramas, or draping them over an automobile, ranchers and federal employees were advertising and reinforcing the boundaries that they sought to establish. Wolf skins and carcasses were used to give physical heft to those ideological boundaries, displaying the costs of remaking the land for both colonized and colonizer, as wolves were rooted up from their homelands and their remains transferred to the edges of familiar, domestic spaces as visual testimony to the conquerors’ power over the wild. The effectiveness of such boundary-making efforts was starkly realized in state after state in the twentieth century: Arkansas had its last wolf killed in 1928; Washington in 1940; Wyoming in 1940; Colorado in 1945; Oregon in 1947; Texas and New Mexico in 1970; and Arizona in 1976. In many of these places, an effective breeding population had been absent since the mid-1920s, many decades prior to these last deaths.

Wolves were not the only predator animal targeted for extermination in the United States. Bears, mountain lions, coyotes, and innumerable “non-target” animals that were victims of the liberal use of poisons were extirpated from parts of their historic range by the first decades of the twentieth century. Animals that “preyed” on agricultural profit margins, like prairie dogs, some birds, and various insect “pests,” also provoked government involvement. Underlying such exterminations was a pervasive belief that, Darwinian assertions to the contrary, humans were different not only in degree but in kind from other animals, with the unique responsibility of harnessing nature’s forces to their own ends alone. The fate of wolves was a shared one, a piece of a larger national project to make the United States secure for domestic animals and promote

the maximum productivity of desirable game species. Unlike most of their non-domestic animal kin, however, wolves were largely unable to survive the “control” efforts of government agents.²³

Green Fire and Thinking like a Mountain

Yet in the midst of these last deaths, and even because of them, increasing numbers of Americans were beginning to doubt the supposed need for landscapes divested of predator animals like wolves. Wolves continued to be associated with wilderness, but with the separation incurred by a rapidly urbanizing America a new set of values began to intrude upon the old, transforming the associations that were attached to wilderness and bestowing a positive value upon both uncultivated lands and the undomesticated creatures that most concretely represented these lands. Ironically perhaps, the deracination of wolves gave them greater symbolic weight as people began to intensively question the breadth of human environmental manipulation and the impacts of such changes became more evident and pressing throughout the 1960s.²⁴ An ecologically motivated movement for landscapes with a full complement of native species began to gain traction in post-World War II America, and one story above others captured such

²³ In the lower forty-eight states, wolves continued to survive only in remote areas of Minnesota, largely due to migrating populations of wolves from Canada. Physiological and social factors account, in part, for wolves’ inability to endure the eradication campaigns. For example, in comparison to coyotes, wolves have more specific prey needs and reproduce more slowly (for a nice summary of these adaptive discrepancies, see Coleman 2004: 94, 184, 229). For reflections on why mountain lions were able to endure in the Southwest, while wolves were eradicated, see Brown ([1983] 2002: 173-175). As Robinson put it, wolves are “canny and adaptable but not omnipotent” (2005: 103).

²⁴ Historian Andrew Isenberg argues, for example, that Leopold’s “parable” of the dying wolf represented a “moral ecology of wildlife” that stood as a “higher law” against destructive American manipulation of the environment (2002: 55-56). For Isenberg, such claims of a native “moral economy” parallel the larger “natural law of the wild” as a “moral ecology” that stands against capitalist manipulation (2002a: 55-56). While Isenberg’s argument is provocative, my reading of Leopold’s work leads me to believe that he had goals that were at once more modest and more profound than critiquing capitalism: Leopold’s most severe and repeated critiques are levied against human arrogance generally, no matter what the economic system. Leopold was, to the end, a forest *manager*, and never argued for the cessation of invasive human action but for *thoughtful and ethical* human interaction with the natural world.

sentiments at this critical juncture when Americans were more willing than ever to regard wolves as a symbol of loss instead of danger.

Aldo Leopold's essay, "Thinking Like a Mountain," though only modestly appreciated in the years following its initial release in *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), eventually became a foundational reference point and inspiration for environmentalists, ecologists, ethicists, and many others.²⁵ It is no mistake that wolves were central to this short essay. Because wolves had long borne the brunt of animosity toward predators and other "useless" animals in the United States, they were also the ideal animal for symbolically embodying the coming sea-change in public sentiment. It is also no mistake that Leopold himself, a forester and wildlife manager seasoned by his own successes and failures in nearly four decades of experience, came to see something more significant than just a dying wolf in the personal encounter he described.

Recalling his younger days in the forest service, Leopold wrote that when he was young and "full of trigger itch," he and a group of colleagues were eating lunch above a river in eastern Arizona. Their interest was piqued when they spied what they thought was a doe fording the stream. They soon realized their mistake: below them, a mother wolf and her pups were greeting one another, oblivious to the well-heeled government workers above. "In those days," Leopold

²⁵ I cover some of Leopold's influences on environmentalism and ecology. For readers interested in the influence of Leopold on environmental ethics, the work of Baird Callicott is paramount. Callicott taught the first environmental ethics class in 1971 and established the first academic program in environmental philosophy, and has written extensively on Leopold, including in books such as *Companion to a Sand County Almanac* (editor, 1987), *In Defense of the Land Ethic* (1989c), *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays* (1991, co-edited with Susan Fladler), and *Beyond the Land Ethic* (1999). Since the 1970s, the field of environmental ethics has blossomed, and Leopold's land ethic has provided the ethical and ecological pylons for subsequent construction. As of 1998, according to Michael Nelson, there were "4 environmental ethics journals, courses in environmental ethics taught at hundreds of universities and colleges throughout the world, various graduate programs specializing in environmental philosophy, 2 dozen anthologies in the area, 2 international societies for environmental ethics and philosophy, and thousands of articles and books on environmental ethics written by philosophers and nonphilosophers alike" (1998: 742). Sophisticated treatments of the ethical factors involved in wildlife management are becoming more prevalent, and one can expect to see more work in this area as ethicists call attention to and offer prescriptions for bridging the gaps between ideas, policy, and practice. For examples of this kind of work, see Jickling and Paquet (2005); and Lynn (2002, 2006).

reflected, “we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy. ...When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide-rocks.” When Leopold and his crew arrived, they bore witness to a “green fire” as it died in the mother wolf’s eyes, a moment that impressed itself upon his memory and led him to reflect upon its deeper significance: “I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters’ paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view” ([1949] 1987: 129-130).

This experience not only marked a change in Leopold’s view of predator species but also contributed to altering his view of the human place in the biotic community. In order to “think like a mountain,” Leopold declared, one had to consider the wolf’s integral role in the larger landscape. In the absence of natural predators, deer would denude the mountain, encouraging erosion that, if left unchecked, would degrade the entire ecosystem. “I now suspect,” he wrote, “that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer” ([1949] 1987: 130). The lesson Leopold drew from this, stated later in the book, was that humans have a great responsibility – not to assume a self-defeating “conqueror role” but to be merely a “plain member and citizen” of the biotic community ([1949] 1987: 204).

While there is little doubt that Leopold’s reflections on “thinking like a mountain” were powerfully expressed, he was not the first to articulate a holistic understanding of earthen processes,²⁶ nor was he the first scientist to argue for tolerance toward predators.²⁷ One of the

²⁶ See, for example, Clarence Glacken’s in depth study *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (1967). In a post-Darwinian context, Americans like popular turn of the twentieth-century nature writer John Burroughs appealed to an “indwelling, mysterious power that physics or chemistry cannot analyze” (Burroughs, in Worster 1994: 17) as the driving force and connective tissue of evolutionary processes. This unified vision of the natural world, later known as organicism, both influenced and was influenced by early twentieth-century ecologists (Worster 1994: 17-21). Also worth noting is a book with which Leopold was familiar, Pyotr Ouspensky’s *Tertium Organum* (1911), which proposed that the

reasons Leopold remains an intriguing figure is that he was among those who existed on the threshold of changing land management policies, from managing undesirable individual species for the sake of “improving” desirable game animal numbers, to viewing these species as part of a larger land community in which each part had a vital function.²⁸

Early in his career, Leopold’s partiality was for game animals like deer, and he openly advocated catching the last wolf and mountain lion so that deer could flourish (see Leopold [1920] 1995: 192; Fladler 1974: 30). In his sundry forestry positions in the southwestern United States (1909-1924), he showed an aptitude for bringing together various constituencies for game protection under the same banner, but as a faithful forester of his time, part of his public outreach included a focus on “raising a fight on predatory animals” (Leopold, in Fladler 1974: 13).

Leopold was in the Southwest during the time when the remnant wolves were being poisoned

earth was “an entire organism.” Fladler notes that it remains a mystery when and where Leopold first discovered Ouspensky’s writings, but Ouspensky’s organicism had a direct influence on Leopold as he attempted to piece together a conceptual framework for the ecological principles he saw at work in his field experience (see Fladler 1974: 18).

²⁷ The American Society of Mammalogists included several scientists that questioned government policies of predator extermination. While most scientists did not go so far as to advocate for the elimination of predator control, they did seek to reign in the rush toward the complete elimination of predator species. One of the first arguments for selective control, as oppose to indiscriminate killing, came from Yellowstone ranger Milton Skinner in 1924 (Skinner [1924] 1995: 292-295). Early calls for predator protection also came from some biologists, among them two brothers who worked for the Bureau of Biological Survey but were atypical members in its ranks, Olaus and Adolph Murie. Olaus did not disclaim the necessity of killing or managing “problem” animals, but he believed such work should be done properly and to an appropriate scale. He parted ways with the philosophy of the Bureau, and asked for greater tolerance for threatened predator animals, quipping, “I dislike no animal because it eats” (in Worster 1994: 283).²⁷ Adolph Murie, for his part, wrote the earliest definitive study of wolf behavior, *The Wolves of Mount McKinley* (1944). His contributions included extensive field observations on the social behavior of wolves, which led him, in contrast to the vast majority of literature on wolves up to that point, to emphasize their “friendliness.” His pleasure in his work was evident; as he stated, though most of the den activity he observed was “unexciting and quiet...it was an inexhaustible thrill to watch the wolves simply because they typify the wilderness so completely” (Murie [1944] 1995: 319). For the headaches that Olaus Murie caused the Biological Survey, see Robinson 2005: 229-236. Also, Thomas Dunlap offers an astute summation of the differences in the brothers’ training as a reflection of the burgeoning field of wildlife ecology (1988: 74-76).

²⁸ In his sundry forestry positions in the southwestern United States (1909-1924), Leopold showed an aptitude for bringing together various constituencies for game protection under the same banner, but as a faithful forester of his time, part of his public outreach initially included a focus on “raising a fight on predatory animals” (in Fladler 1974: 13). From the mid-1930s, and especially toward the end of his life, Leopold increasingly began to question the breadth of human foresight in management decisions. For excellent treatments of this topic, see Fladler (1974: 36-75), and Meine (1988).

and trapped out of Arizona and New Mexico. The shooting of the wolf that he described in “Thinking Like a Mountain” conformed to the spirit of this more comprehensive predator elimination campaign. Yet his experience in the Southwest also revealed to him that poor use of the land – through overgrazing, road-building, and unmanaged timber cutting – could have detrimental impacts that could resonate through an entire ecosystem. Following his move to Wisconsin in 1924, Leopold began an earnest effort to put such ideas to paper.²⁹

For Leopold, the eradication of wolves was a gut-response, a too quick effort to conform the land to the desires of a few, chief among them livestock ranchers and hunters, rather than account for what the land needed to ensure its long-term resiliency. As he lamented, he had been an “accessory” to the wolf’s destruction, and therefore contributed to the dissolution of the wilderness: “Here my sin against the wolves caught up with me” (Leopold, in Fladler 1974: 102).

Leopold effectively wedded scientific understandings of the natural world with an ethical mandate that proved a foundational source for the arguments of future wilderness advocates, and, for many, he grounded holistic spiritual intuitions in empirical evidence. Unlike the wilderness advocates before him, Leopold had a new science on his side that made his arguments much more persuasive: ecology. According to historian Roderick Nash, this made Leopold “the prophet of a new order” (2001: 197),³⁰ an order that included predators within its purview.

²⁹ “The Conservation Ethic,” a predecessor of the more nuanced Land Ethic, was written in 1933, and “A Biotic View of Land,” written in 1939, further explored the links between all parts of the land community and their importance to one another for ecological stability (Fladler 1974: 25, 31). In his professorship of game management (1933), and, later, wildlife management (1939) at the University of Wisconsin, Leopold further ruminated on the interdependence of human beings with their environments, eventually bringing these thoughts together in his now-celebrated Land Ethic. For a summary of Leopold’s literary development and output, see Meine (1998).

³⁰ Nash suggests something deeper underlying the burgeoning wilderness movement by calling Leopold a prophet. Science may have helped frame wilderness arguments, but among wilderness advocates there was a motivation that went beyond scientific theory. This was indicated when Robert Marshall’s father described his wilderness lobbying as “missionary work,” or when Leopold called wilderness preservation “an act of national contrition,” or when Robert Sterling Yard claimed a “gospel of wilderness” among a core group of wilderness “believers” (Nash 2001:

The Green Fire Spreads: Charisma and Advocacy

In the affluent and increasingly urban and suburban context of a post-World War II America, people were becoming more receptive to ideas like Leopold's, more willing to question the role of the government in "controlling" wildlife according to Progressive-era management philosophies, and more interested in visiting the wildlands that constituted America's "natural heritage" in order to see such creatures and escape the "artificiality" of citified existence.³¹ The immediate threat of wolves, both real and perceived, had largely passed into legend. A trickle of disapproval from select scientists would turn into a flood of public sentiment. Wolves became the icon of choice to represent endangered species, ecologically threatened lands, and a vision of humanity that laid less emphasis on dominance over the nonhuman world.

The passage of the Endangered Species Act (1973) remains a legislative milestone, reflecting a rising public consciousness regarding animal extinction, and it proved a pivotal turning point for wolves, which were listed soon after for protection.³² With the Endangered Species Act, "The heart of Leopold's land ethic," writes Michael Robinson, "was partially written into federal law" (2005a: 304). As discussions began about carrying out the mandate of the ESA, part of which is "to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered

201, 199, 207). Wilderness was not a mere resource for these and other advocates; it was an ultimate reference point, a long-term baseline with which to compare degraded lands as well as a mediator of religious inspiration. On Leopold's early work as a wilderness advocate, which included founding the Wilderness Society along with Robert Marshall in 1935, see Meine (1988: 194-197, 342-346).

³¹ Such sentiments preceded Leopold, of course, most notably expressed in Henry David Thoreau's claim that a civilization's vitality was directly dependent on its rootage in "wildness" (2001: 225, 239), but this stream of thought became increasingly prominent in a rapidly industrializing America. For the relationship between urbanization, affluence, and the increased popularity of National Parks, see Nash (1970). See also Nash's emphasis on the importance of "scarcity value" in preserving wilderness areas (Nash 2001: xiv, 249), a value that applies in parallel fashion to wolves. See also, Dunlap (1988). For how Hollywood films reflected such social changes in their storylines, even if most wild animal heroes reflected "sanitized" human values of "natural" benevolence and altruism, see Ingram (2000: 69-136); on wolves in particular, see pp. 102-113.

³² Nie (2003) provides a solid overview of how the ESA has been tested and modified because of wolf reintroduction efforts (see particularly pp. 90-104, 119-123). See also Dunlap (1988: 142-146, 152-154).

species and threatened species depend may be conserved” (1973, §2b), animal and wilderness advocacy groups seized upon the high-profile image of wolves to advertise their causes.

The elevation of wolves as a species that was to be vigilantly protected, not killed indiscriminately, often carried connotations of a larger hoped-for healing between people and the natural world. Indeed, many people anticipated a resurrection of sorts, understanding wolves to pose a quintessential moral test as to whether humans could co-exist with large predators and thus with “wild” nature. For example, writer SueEllen Campbell, in reference to the 1995 reintroduction of gray wolves to Yellowstone National Park, mused:

Sometimes I think human life is a tug-of-war between two kinds of people: those who mostly destroy and those who mostly try to protect, restore, or create ... So I suppose that maybe when the creators triumph over the destroyers, when we mend something we have shattered, a kind of miracle occurs. Is our restoration of wolves to Yellowstone a miracle? It feels like one to me, or at least like grace: what once we lost, we now have found (2005: 10-11).

Wolf reintroduction, and the possibility of reintroducing wolves, represented a confluence of interests – ecological, ethical, and even spiritual – with a common unifying theme: if wolves could be “saved,” or at least partially restored to portions of their former historic habitat, then humans too might discover ways of living that supported the flourishing of life rather than its destruction.

Wild Animals with Green Fire

Leopold’s “green fire” trope wended its way into environmental discourse as a means of drawing attention to these issues.³³ By the early 1980s, a new movement in environmentalism had begun, and newly formed “radical” groups like Earth First! unashamedly proclaimed an

³³ Leopold struggled for some time to find a publisher for *A Sand County Almanac*, and even after its posthumous publication in 1949, it took still longer for the book to receive acclaim. The book was rejected by three different publishers before Oxford University Press picked it up. Knopf’s editors played with the idea of publishing the book, but ultimately felt that it was “far from being satisfactorily organized” and that it was “unlikely to win approval from readers” (in Meine 1998: 704). They were correct – at least initially. The book went out of print in the mid-1950s. It was rediscovered in the 1960s as environmental issues became a growing concern.

ideology based on ecological ideas and reverence (sometimes worship) of the earth.³⁴ Rallying around the motto, “no compromise in defense of Mother Earth,” Earth First! brought together activists who championed the protection of wild habitats and many who were willing to engage in civil disobedience or illegal activities (ecotage/monkeywrenching)³⁵ in order to curtail what was perceived as anthropocentric arrogance. These activists’ use of wolf narratives and imagery underscores one of the ways in which the symbolic values accorded to wolves shifted, and what some people believed was at stake in terms of human-animal identity, for within the radical environmental movement wolves represented the wild, primal forces that humans needed to recover in order to “come to their senses” and better resist the industrial and corporate forces that threatened to unweave the biotic fabric of life.

A Sand County Almanac had entered the environmental canon by the time Earth First! formed, and Dave Foreman, a co-founder and charismatic leader in the young movement, became Leopold’s foremost evangelizer. According to Bron Taylor, Leopold’s “green fire” experience “evolved into a mythic moral fable in which the wolf communicates with human beings, stressing inter-species kinship [and became] a symbol of life in the wild, incorporated

³⁴ By the middle of the twentieth century, the philosophical underpinnings of environmental groups had begun to change. Understanding wilderness areas as places of spiritual connection and recreational pleasure would remain important, but frustrations over the continued abuses of government agencies and private corporations would push some of those concerned with environmental protection beyond conservation and preservation to a posture of defense. As the breadth of public concern increased in the 1960s and 1970s to include environmental issues like overpopulation, toxic wastes, and species extinction, established environmental organizations experienced rapid growth. But despite landmark political victories (e.g., Wilderness Act, 1964; National Environmental Policy Act, 1969; Marine Mammals Protection Act, 1972; Endangered Species Act, 1973), largely based on the popular clout of organizations such as the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society, a distinctive and restless undercurrent within environmentalism emerged, represented most publicly by groups like Earth First! (see Manes 1990; Scarce 1991; Zakin 1993; Taylor 1991, 1995).

³⁵ Ecotage is a conjoining of the words economic and sabotage, a neologism denoting extralegal actions that involve attempts to protect wild places and creatures. Less fancy but no less common, *monkeywrenching* is a term used interchangeably with ecotage by radical environmentalists. Though there has always been considerable debate among radical environmentalists about the efficacy of illegal direct action tactics, most radical environmentalists maintain that ecotage – in contrast to terrorism or ecoterrorism – is directed against inanimate objects or property and therefore should be considered nonviolent. For more on this subject, see Foreman and Haywood (2002: 1-16), and Foreman (1991: 119-143).

into the ritual of the tradition ... with the idea that an authentic human life is lived wildly and spontaneously in defence [sic] of Mother Earth” (1991: 260). For Foreman, who often wove his own dramatic revision of Leopold’s “Thinking Like a Mountain” into his folksy orations, the howl of a wolf awakened a larger human need. He explained, for example, in one speech that

The wolf’s howl is the cry of defiant contempt. But it’s also something more. It’s the cry of joy, of pleasure in being alive. No matter how bad it gets, it’s wonderful to be alive on earth ... No matter how depressed we get, how angry, we still have to be full of joy, happiness. That’s what keeps us going. So, yeah, howl with contempt for adversity. Howl with defiance. But howl with joy, too ... Robots don’t howl. But animals do. Free, wild animals with green fire (Foreman in Zakin 1993: 198).

Such sentiments were complemented by many iconic illustrations in the *Earth First!* journal, as well as other radical environmental publications, which contrasted the deadly impacts of industrial civilization to the freedom and authenticity represented by wild wolves (Fig. 3-8). In figure 3-8, the juxtaposition of an industrially polluted, mechanized world and a thriving, yet threatened, wilderness is mediated by the dying wolf, who represents the death of liberty itself, as the caption indicates: “As wolves die, so does freedom. Hear the warning...” The image visually echoes Foreman’s speech, rejecting the anthropocentrism of the industrial-human (“Robots don’t howl.”), while appealing to wolves as paragons of authentic ecological and spiritual virtue (“But animals do. Free, wild animals with green fire.”). Similar themes were evoked in other images, with wolves as the chosen figure to represent the death or near-death of the wild in order to stoke the consciences of viewers (Fig. 3-9).

For radical environmentalists, however, wolves were not just representatives of the natural world’s victimization and exploitation. More fancifully, renegade wolves who thwarted the minions of development were also popular icons in radical environmental publications (Figs. 3-10, 3-11).

Wolves howling in triumph atop an overturned bulldozer, or loping away from the scene of their monkeywrenching exploits conforms to a type of animal imagery that critical theorist Steve Baker dubbed “vengeance cartoons,” in which animals “turn the tables on the society which so readily marginalizes them” (2001: 152) and “the values of the dominant culture are undermined” (156). For radical environmentalists, such images, complemented by the view that the wild is the true home of all biological life, reinforced their biocentric beliefs that “wild” human and nonhuman animals were justified in resisting industrial development that threatened sacred wilderness areas.³⁶ Throughout the 1980s, such ideas were actively promoted through “Green Fire Roadshows,” in which activists and musicians traveled the country in order to spread this message (Taylor 2002: 30-32, 39-40).

Though, especially during the 1990s, the interests of those within the radical environmental movement increasingly came to include broader issues such as corporate globalization, solidarity with third-world peoples, and anarchist social philosophy, wolves’ images remained potent icons of resistance – as evidenced on the covers of the 20th (2000) and 25th (2005) anniversary editions of the *Earth First!* journal, where wolves are prominently featured. Many radical environmentalists believe that attentiveness to the needs of these and other threatened animals can encourage deeper environmental and metaphysical interconnection, as well as lead to direct resistance on their behalf and the lands they inhabit.³⁷ Critical to such

³⁶ Taylor has analyzed the religious dimensions and political impacts of radical environmentalists in a series of articles (including Taylor 1991, 1995, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2005b, 2008), which can be reviewed online: <http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/pdf/cv.pdf>.

³⁷ Numerous examples can be found in the *Earth First!* journal. See, as one example, Coronado (2005). In relation to wolves, one activist noted, “They are social like humans, but they are also wild. *Wild*. I just spent five days in jail for protesting a ski resort in Colorado. I thought about wolves – and about jaguars – the whole time. We used to have wild jaguars in Arizona and New Mexico. I felt just like a trapped wolf or jaguar in its zoo or breeding pen. I’ve been arrested. We’ve all been arrested” (quoted in Russell [1993] 2005: 154). For an interesting encounter with two activists associated with Earth First! and involved in the early push for Mexican wolf reintroduction, see Burbank (1990: 161-171). Burbank noted that the more deeply he was drawn into the politics of wolf reintroduction

perceptions is the supposition that humans are not biologically, or even morally, superior to other animals. Thus, the de-centering of humans as environmentally omniscient that Leopold experienced following his wolf-epiphany has been extended in the radical environmental milieu as part of a larger social critique – and wolves have become a primary icon for such critiques.

Conserving Green Fire

This concern, of course, is not confined to radical environmental activists. Since the 1970s, one of the sources from which both radical and more mainstream environmentalists have drawn a great deal of their ecological information has been the field of conservation biology. Conservation biology is marked by a strong sense of urgency, a product of these scientists' feelings that natural systems are being compromised globally by human abuses. Though conservation biologists generally have been more cautious about announcing their personal values than non-scientists have, in many ways conservation biologists follow in the Leopoldian tradition, who in the latter years of his life was explicit about the obligation he believed scientists had to inform the public not just with quantitative data but with an “ecological education” that induced a sense of wonder regarding evolutionary processes.

Part of the “mission” of conservation biologists has been promoting ideas about biodiversity. One key to conceptualizing biodiversity has been drawing attention to animals that are considered “strongly interacting species” in order to highlight their critical contributions to ecosystem resiliency.³⁸ Wolves have received attention in this respect, since they influence the

in the Southwest, the more he found that radical environmentalists were instrumental in pushing the process forward.

³⁸ For a fascinating treatment of the personal values of various conservation biologists, see Takacs (1996); cf. Soulé (1985: 727-734). Strongly interactive species not only include large predators, which on the surface seem the most likely candidates, but also species like prairie dogs, beavers, bison, or plant species that enable insect pollination. The presence of such species can significantly enrich habitat and encourage ecosystem diversification. While the strength of interactions is dependent on context, and therefore never subject to a one-size-fits-all solution, conservation biologists argue that “a given species should receive special attention for recovery – beyond mere

numbers of herbivores, like elk, moose, and deer, whose population densities can impact vegetation (see, for example, Ripple and Beschetta 2004, Ripple and Larsen 2004, and Terborgh *et al.* 1999). Beyond their physical charisma, which enhances their iconic status, wolves are thus looked to as ecological indicators, a top predator whose presence is likely to enhance species diversity. In the long term, conservation biologists are interested in preserving evolutionary processes, but they rely on the iconic appeal of charismatic species to inform the public about larger issues regarding biodiversity.

There is more to conservation biology than ecological arguments, however. Scientists like Michael Soulé and Reed Noss, for example, contend that “by insuring the viability of large predators, we restore the subjective, emotional essence of the ‘wild’ or wilderness” (1998: 24). Wolves, in other words, are not merely ecological artifacts; when wolves are absent, possible subjective connections to the land, conservation biologists contend, are impoverished, as well as the biodiversity of the affected habitat. Wolves, in this sense, are a window through which to think about what ecologically rich landscapes demand of humans, for, as Soulé and Noss put it, though large carnivores can be “politically troublesome” anything less than their restoration is a “betrayal to the land” (1998: 24-25; see Fig. 3-12).

Wildlife conservation and restoration groups, such as the Wildlands Project, the Rewilding Institute, the Center for Biological Diversity, Sinapu (which partnered with Forest Guardians in January 2008 to form WildEarth Guardians), and Defenders of Wildlife, have been heavily influenced by conservation biologists and have drawn upon their scientific work to advocate for

demographic viability – if its absence or unusual rarity causes cascading, dissipative transformation in ecosystems, including alterations of simplifications in ecological structure, function, or composition (Soulé *et al.* 2005: 170)

the establishment, protection, and restoration of large wilderness areas and endangered species.³⁹ Because of their high profile as an endangered species, wolves have literally become a “political animal,” an effective and affective means of putting a nonhuman face to these conservation efforts.

Defenders of Wildlife can be considered a chief example of how wolf imagery may be utilized in this respect. Founded in 1947, the conservation purview of Defenders of Wildlife – a national conservation organization with a membership in the hundreds of thousands – encompasses many species of wildlife, yet wolves remain the primary iconic animal for its promotional efforts. In addition to such regular fund- and awareness-raising campaigns as their adopt-a-wolf program, through which contributors receive a stuffed animal and certificate of “adoption,” Defenders has disseminated images of wolves on postcards, T-shirts, coffee mugs, mousepads, backpacks, and especially through their iconic logo. The most common rendition of the Defenders’ logo features a sideview of a silhouetted wolf captured in mid-howl against a backdrop of pastel colors (Fig. 3-13).⁴⁰

Using such a logo simply would not be possible, from an ideological or a marketing perspective, were wolves not invested with such symbolic value, as a representative not just of endangered wolves but, for some, as an icon of *all* endangered animals and biodiversity more generally. *Orion* magazine executive editor Hal Clifford, for example, articulated well the feelings of many for whom wolves represent more than a single threatened species:

³⁹ Revealing the overlap between those from grassroots environmental groups and from the academy, Foreman and Soulé were among those who founded the Wildlands Project in 1991, following Foreman’s departure from Earth First! in 1990. Though Foreman has since gone on to devote his time to The Rewilding Institute, a conservation “think tank” he helped found in 2003, conservation biologists like Soulé, John Terborgh, Paul Paquet, and others continue to serve as science advisors for both the Wildlands Project and the The Rewilding Institute.

⁴⁰ Other iterations of the logo include the wolf in the same pose but with visible details instead of in silhouette, and in only two colors (black and white, or green and white).

When I consider the wolf I see the expression of a full web of life, from the nematodes to the fungus to the vole, from the vulture to the pine beetle to the mule deer, all there in a dark and elusive form on four swift paws. The wolf's thriving signals that much is right with the broader world upon which it depends (2005: 193).

Likewise, the Defenders website explains,

The Defenders of Wildlife wolf logo symbolizes not only our long-standing leadership in predator protection but also our broader biodiversity mission. ...Because wolves can require home ranges of several hundred square miles, their conservation can help preserve a host of other species making use of the same habitat. The wolf also is a symbol of wild nature.⁴¹

The *also* in the final sentence should not be overlooked. Biodiversity may be an important symbol itself, conjuring various images of fecundity or ecosystem integrity, but when an image is needed that represents, or at least does not conflict with, what an American audience might describe as “wild nature,” a wolf is frequently chosen to perform this symbolic work.

Also significant is the posture of the wolf in the logo, with head raised skyward and mouth opened in what can only be a howl. A sound that once conjured such fear and loathing has now, for many people, been reconceived as wolf “music” (see Fig. 3-14) as suggested by book titles like *Wolf Songs* (Busch 1994) and *WolfSong: A Natural and Fabulous History of Wolves* (Feher-Elston 2004). Educator and writer Susan Zwinger provided a visceral example of the “otherworldly” contrast of what a howl can mean for a twenty-first century American. While camping in Alaska, Zwinger heard a group of wolves howl that “vibrated my bone marrow and carved out my soul... [and] cannot be captured in words any more than sex can be described to a virgin,” for it is the “intimate howl of pure wilderness that awakens the wildest and most authentic me” (2005: 25). Canadian wolf biologist John Theberge, whose book *Wolves and Wilderness* (1975) exuded his enthusiasm for tracking wolf movements through call-and-response howling, wrote that at the howl of a wolf,

⁴¹ Defenders of Wildlife, “About Defenders of Wildlife,” <http://www.defenders.org/about/> (accessed 5 April 2007).

The pulse of a man quickens, as it has ever since we began to compete directly with wolves over a million years ago. But today the howl reminds us that our past is deeprooted in wildness. It warns us not to go too far in destroying natural environments. It epitomizes the wilderness we have fought so successfully to conquer and now must fight to save (1975: 152).

The Defenders logo uses such positive connotations in its favor, allowing viewers to imagine that sound, which for many who support wolf recovery has become the “sweet song of wilderness” (Theberge 1975: 123).⁴² As these various selections about the positive values attributed to wolf howls indicate, what once were considered the dismal cries of unsubdued wilderness have been reconceived as a song of authentic wholeness, reminding humans of their responsibilities to the larger natural world and beckoning them to understand themselves as embedded within this natural matrix.

Icons on the Ground: The Dilemmas of Controlling Green Fire

Reclaiming the land for wolves represents one vision for the natural world inspired by wolf iconography. The iconic significance of wolves is far from resolved, however, and the meanings assigned to wolves, despite their recent celebrity status, remains unstable and contested. The presence (or threat of the potential presence) of wolves in the American landscape continues to represent a host of competing values that vie for attention in the public realm. As the iconic associations people have with wolves meet the practical realities of co-existing with them – realities that are shared unequally between those who dwell near reintroduction sites and those

⁴² Theberge noted that, as early as 1963, Algonquin Park in Canada began hosting evening wolf howling sessions for interested campers and tourists. The response was overwhelming, and at the time of Theberge’s writing, five thousand people a year attended such sessions, which Theberge interpreted in the following manner: “These people will never stand back and see the wolf legislated out of existence. They will hear that howl and in spirit leave the city and return to the wilderness any time the word wolf is mentioned. For whatever the wolf howl means to another wolf, it means more to us” (1975: 131). See also Christine Schadler’s more ambiguous reflections on her participation in the Algonquin howling sessions (2001: 161-62), in which she questions whether such discomfort-free howling truly signifies any kind of substantive change in the human proclivity to manipulate the natural world.

that do not – difficult questions arise over what human-created boundaries are appropriate for an icon of wildness.

For some, wolf restoration efforts hail the fruition of Leopold’s “green fire” experience: a willingness to accept a humbler human role as part of the larger biotic community. Bruce Babbitt, for example, who served as Secretary of the Interior at a time when proposals were on the table to reintroduce gray wolves to the Northern Rockies and the more diminutive subspecies of Mexican gray wolves to Arizona and New Mexico, commented that Leopold’s story of the dying green fire

touched me, in part, because it happened in mountains I had explored countless times and thought I knew quite well. I knew wolves once roamed the canyons, and knew my family had played a role in ridding the land of predators. But at the time, I didn’t quite grasp the importance of their presence – or the shame of their absence (1995: 9).

Not uncommon among wilderness and wildlife advocates, though less common for persons in as high a political position as he was, Babbitt concluded that restoring wolves was an act of reigniting the fire that Leopold had, in his ignorance, helped extinguish, and signaled a transformative rebirth: “...[T]hroughout America, the green fire that Leopold saw in the eyes of a wild gray wolf will live again. And the fact of its existence, even if we might never see it for ourselves, can challenge and change us all” (1995: 10).

Not everyone shared Babbitt’s optimism.⁴³ Especially in the areas most impacted by wolf recovery efforts, challenges to wolf reintroduction have been consistent and oftentimes acrimonious. The fears that people express are not always directly related to potential livestock losses; one common sentiment is that wolf reintroduction represents a federal ploy to divest

⁴³ Popular nature writer Rick Bass provided an anecdotal indication of Babbitt’s unpopularity among at least some rural Arizonans. After conversing with a store owner in a “respectful but passionate” manner about various issues, “the name *Bruce Babbitt* was mentioned, and the man’s demeanor changed as if thrown by a switch. All reason and, it seemed, humanity left him – his face went stiff – and he replied coldly, barely able to speak, so great was his hatred, that ‘the only problem with Bruce Babbitt is that he is still alive.’ And that was the end of that conversation” (Bass 1998: 86).

private-property owners of their land. People who feel this way often ask: Why should the psychological burdens and economic costs of wolf reintroduction be borne most directly by those who are least supportive of these introductions? Wolf advocates counter: Why should the public bear the ecological costs of a landscape absent of predators, particularly when government subsidies support the livestock industry?⁴⁴

One advertisement that offered a vivid example of the stakes involved for wolves amidst such reintroduction controversy is worth dwelling on here, especially in contrast to previous photographs (Figs. 3-6, 3-7). The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) has been heavily involved in wolf reintroduction efforts, and its publications have consistently pointed out what those at the CBD consider the dubious actions of the livestock industry. In an advertisement printed in the *New York Times* (see Fig. 3-15, the Center accused the livestock industry of being “unwilling to share even a tiny portion of America’s vast public lands,” noting especially what the Center believed were the frivolous lawsuits of cattle associations and the more serious threats of some ranchers to shoot wolves on sight.

The image and the accompanying text (all of which is not shown in Fig. 3-15 place before the viewer a scene of violence. Comparing this to previous images depicting the deaths of wolves (Figs. 3-6, 3-7), one can discern that their themes have been reversed: if the wolves hung as trophies in the 1920s were intended to reinforce the “just” cause of ranchers in protecting “innocent” livestock and to reinforce the necessity of government control and human dominion, in the CBD advertisement viewers are provoked to ask why an “innocent” wolf was unjustly shot and why the perpetrators of this violence had not yet been apprehended or punished.

⁴⁴ For an excellent breakdown of the “symbol and surrogate” issues that orbit around wolf reintroduction, see Nie (2003: 73-78, 93, 101).

In both cases, wolves' broken and opened bodies are used to give more concrete weight to abstract ideas. In the 1920s photographs, wolves are "sacrificed" (justly, it was implied) for the teleological good of American progress; they visually substantiated this abstract notion, leading the viewer to imaginatively consider the many unseen wolves that were being killed in order to domesticate and purify the land. In the CBD advertisement, the broken wolf body serves a very different function, with the accompanying text explicitly accusing the perpetrator of unnecessary murder, while implicitly accusing the government of not taking the proper actions to prevent or curtail such violence. Also implicitly involved is the viewer, who, it is suggested, should recognize the injustice of such acts of human hubris and lend support to the CBD's efforts. In this case, the wolf is the "pure" animal that has been defiled while the criminals are those who abuse the land for ill-gained profit. Using iconographic language, one might say that the CBD advertisement depicts an act of violent iconoclasm, except the image denotes not a victory cry but a lament over the failed protections that allowed for the destruction of this iconic animal. At the same time, the advertisement condemns what is considered a regressive human unwillingness to accept a role as "plain member and citizen" of the land community, as Leopold envisioned.

From these contrasting images, similar in their subject matter but vastly different in their connotations, one gains a sense not only of the possible difficulties in reintroducing wolves to areas from which they have been eliminated but of the differences between what various groups consider proper human interaction with the natural world. For those in favor of wolf reintroduction, wolves, as the essence of "wildness," provide an opportunity to "redress past mistakes," as one FWS fact sheet put it (FWS 1998b: 2), and their presence is tangible confirmation that humans, as Trish Stevenson averred, are learning that they are only one part of a greater Earth organism. Resistance to wolf reintroduction, on the other hand, is defended as

protecting local interests, and wolves are considered an unwelcome animal unnecessarily foisted upon struggling rural communities.⁴⁵

Frequently caught in the political crossfire are government employees responsible for carrying out the mandate of the Endangered Species Act. Environmentalists and wilderness advocates, like cattle ranchers and sportsmen before them, now appeal to the power of Washington D.C. to enforce a new set of values and a new set of boundaries. Yet because the movements of wolves continue to be constrained by bureaucratic orders, those who associate wolves with the essence of wildness find invasive management difficult to swallow (see Fig. 3-16).⁴⁶ Doug Honnold, an attorney for the Sierra Club Legal Defense fund, ruminated:

We have the mediagenic Fish & Wildlife Service translocation effort, heralded in virtually every newspaper and television station in the country. The images, as we have seen today, are the images of wolves captured, wolves darted, wolves translocated, and wolves set “free” by man. Big government moving chess pieces on the land. I can’t help but wonder whether this is nothing but another variation of the human desire to control nature that led – in an earlier incarnation – to the extirpation of the wolf from the western landscape (Honnold 1998: 129).

Others place the blame on the public’s shoulders more generally, lamenting that humans are not able to live with unmanaged wolves, and have settled for what writer Charles Bowden called a “Robo Wolf” (Bowden 1995 [1992]: 432) – that is, a wolf so managed by technological means as to lose any semblance of autonomy. Of course, this strikes some wolf advocates as an adulteration of wolves’ wildness and a reflection of a systemic inability to accept the presence of other creatures on their own terms. Wolves, once fenced out of domestic spaces as

⁴⁵ Polling surveys have consistently noted the tendency for urban and suburban dwellers to favor wolf reintroduction, with numbers in favor of reintroduction increasing over time. For an annotated bibliography to dozens of surveys, see Browne-Nuñez and Taylor (2002); also Williams, Ericsson, and Heberlein (2002). For additional survey references, see Fritts *et al.* (2003: 295-97), and Nie (2003: 76).

⁴⁶ Robinson writes that radio-collaring operations, begun on grizzlies in 1961, began with good intentions and led to attempts to define the boundaries of ecosystems by animal movement. However, now radio collars are more likely to be used for apprehending problem wolves. According to Robinson, as a part of the protocol for the Yellowstone reintroduction, the FWS attempted to have at least one collared animal in each pack in case of livestock depredation; this wolf was known as a “Judas wolf” (2005: 345).

undersirables, are currently fenced in, so to speak, by the boundaries of their recovery zones, which raises serious questions for some people about whether ideologies are truly changing or if wolf management is merely a more benign alternative to a longstanding theme of human dominion.

Reflecting on Green Fire

*A deep chesty bawl echoes from rimrock to rimrock, rolls down the mountain, and fades into the far blackness of the night. It is an outburst of wild defiant sorrow, and of contempt for all the adversities of the world.*⁴⁷

Ed Bangs, a FWS biologist deeply involved in Yellowstone reintroduction efforts, once stated, “Wolves and their management have almost nothing to do with reality, which makes working on any wolf issue hard on biologists, who are trained as scientists and not as psychologists” (Bangs 1995: 397). No doubt Bangs meant that very little of the rhetoric about wolves turns out to be about the biology of wolves. However, far from having “nothing to do with reality,” the complaints that various constituencies raise have everything to do with *perceptions* of reality. And this is why icons – their construction, their destruction, and their strategic deployment – remain an important tool as imaginative markers of identity and shapers of public perception.

Wolf reintroductions have revealed that the meanings assigned to wolves are frequently incompatible, colliding and refracting through various iconographic prisms. As political scientist Martin Nie suggests, the debate over these reintroductions drives home the point that wolves are not merely an ecological or economic problem; they are a democratic problem, exposing power differentials related to variant views about how humans “fit” in nature (2003: 210-211). Wolves may also be considered an iconographic problem, inasmuch as their images are used to shape

⁴⁷ From Leopold ([1949] 1987: 129).

public perceptions and reinforce or disrupt the boundaries through which humans mark their ideological and geographical territories.

As wilderness icons, wolves serve as a type of window to focus attention and energy on an amalgamation of land-related issues, exposing variant worldviews about what priority should be given to creatures who do not always share the interests, economic or otherwise, of humans. Perhaps with their reintroduction, with their actual physical presence on the land, wolves may come to serve a less-noticed function of icons. For if icons are analogous to a window, mediating between the viewer and what are assumed to be larger realities, then they also cast a reflection in the pane of glass, turning the gaze upon the viewer and beckoning introspection and self-critique. In this sense, to meditate on the wolf as an icon is simultaneously to meditate on ourselves, our communities, and our shared environments.

As iconic symbols, wolves have been an important way for many people to evaluate anew the relationships of human beings to other animals, or to express deeply held convictions about nature as a whole. However, there is difficult on-the-ground work that remains – work that inevitably requires practical sacrifices and negotiation – if wolves, not just their images, are to survive and proliferate. Particularly in the context of wolf reintroduction areas, in which people must negotiate not only the symbolic meaning of wolves but their tangible impacts on local human communities and the larger biotic community, the iconic status of wolves brings variant views of the natural world forward for necessary and sometimes heated discussion.



Fig 3-1. Marie Buchfink, *We Are All One Family*, 1982. Used as the cover of the International Wolf Center's 2007-2008 catalog; originally designed for the International Wolf Center's "Wolves and Humans" exhibit. (Courtesy of Marie Buchfink)



Fig 3-2. Tracy Ane Brooks, *Cyndar*, 1992. (Courtesy of Tracy Ane Brooks)



Fig. 3-3. Asanté Riverwind, *Winter Wolf*. (Courtesy of Asanté Riverwind)



Fig 3-4. Sue Coleman, *C-361*. (Courtesy of Sue Coleman)



Fig 3-5. Photograph by George Andrejko, Arizona Game and Fish Department. (Courtesy of George Andrejko)



Fig. 3-6. Predator Control Exhibit, U.S. Biological Survey, 1926. A sign on the back display wall reads: "Conservation, Utilization and Control of Wildlife. Control." (Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Stanley Young Collection, Western History Collection, Z-1582)



Fig. 3-7. Animal Carcasses on Car, between 1919 and 1929? Stamped on the back of the photo print: "If this picture is used in any manner for publicity purposes please see that proper credit is given to the Bureau of Biological Survey." (Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Stanley Young Collection, Western History Collection, Z-1566)



Fig. 3-8. "As Wolves Die, So Does Freedom." (*Beware! Sabotage! Black Cat Manual*, ed. by Graybill, Eugene, OR, 1996, n.p.)



Fig. 3-9. "Do You Understand What We're Losing?" (*Beware! Sabotage! Black Cat Manual*, ed. by Graybill, Eugene, OR, 1996, n.p.)



Fig. 3-10. Brush Wolf (artist), in *Earth First!* 8/5 (1 May 1988): back cover.



Fig. 3-11. TWASHMAN (artist), in *Earth First!* 10/2 (21 December 1989): back page.



Fig. 3-12. Tracy Ane Brooks (artist), poster for purchase in the Mission:Wolf gift shop, Silver Cliff, CO. Interconnection and biodiversity with wolves as central figures. (Photograph by Gavin Van Horn; image used courtesy of Tracy Ane Brooks)

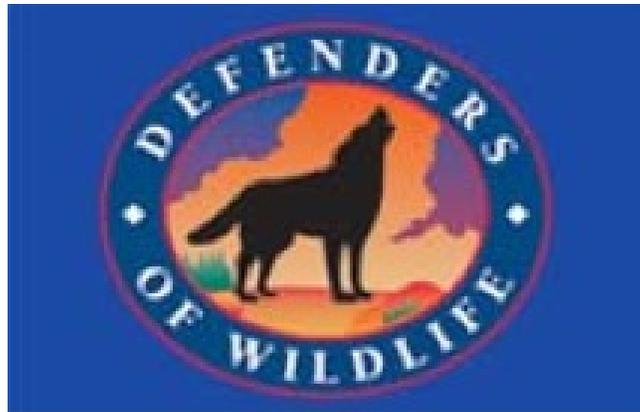


Fig. 3-13. Defenders of Wildlife logo. (Courtesy of Defenders of Wildlife)



Fig. 3-14. Tracy Ane Brooks, *Tootin Tooth*, 1993. Greeting card; available at Mission:Wolf. (Courtesy of Tracy Ane Brooks)

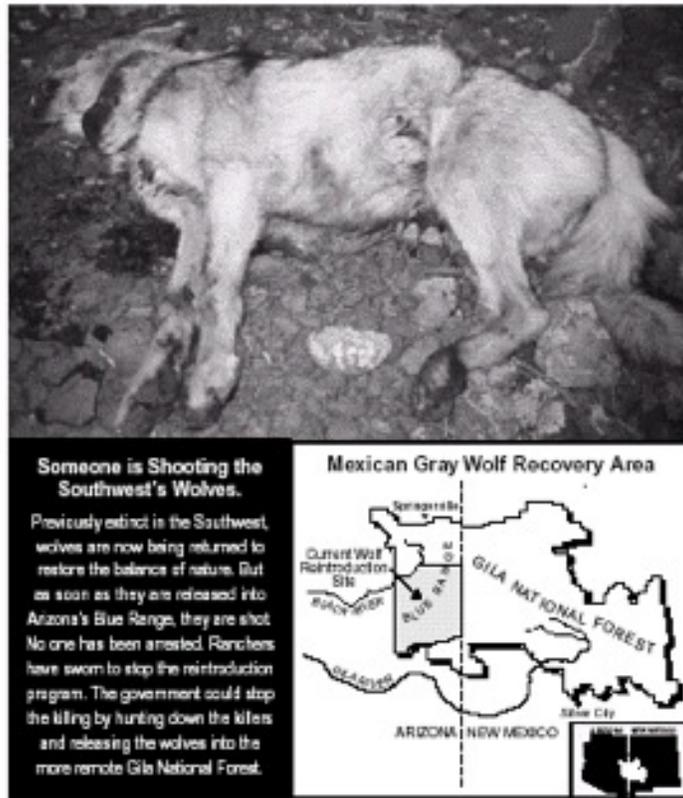


Fig. 3-15. Center for Biological Diversity, “Last Chance for Southwest Wolves and Wilderness”; the full advertisement is available online: <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/swcbd/activist/images/wolf.pdf> (accessed 3 May 2007). (Courtesy of Center for Biological Diversity)



Fig. 3-16. Button pressed in 2005, following a possible moratorium on additional Mexican wolf releases for 2006. (Photograph by Gavin Van Horn; button given to author by Jean Ossorio)

CHAPTER 4 HUMAN AND WOLF TOPOGRAPHY IN THE SOUTHWEST: BACKGROUND

Though in contemporary contexts the majority of people in the United States will never come into contact with actual wolves – and know of them only through various images distributed through television nature programs, commercials, gift shops, magazines, and websites – for thousands of years, wolves and humans shared a common landscape. In the places to which wolves have been reintroduced, citizens must now, again, consider the prospects and challenges of what it means to live with wolves, not just their images.

Up to this point, I have been circling the *idea* of wolves (what they have meant to and how they have been differently represented by various groups) to highlight their deep significance to the ways that Americans have constructed and reflected upon wild animals, wilderness, and nature generally. I will now tighten those circles in order to gain a better vantage point regarding the particular issues that are in play as images of wolves meet the reality of co-existing with them.

In this chapter, I explore the environmental constraints that have shaped wolf and human survival in New Mexico and Arizona, noting why wolves were especially vulnerable (compared to other regions) in the southwestern United States when government “control” programs began in the early twentieth century. I then examine why the Southwest remains a particularly controversial region for reintroduction efforts and some of the special stipulations that were made by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), in collaboration with other federal and state agencies, to accommodate various groups when wolves were reintroduced in 1998. In addition, I will draw on my field research to highlight some of the major concerns expressed by those who are both for and against wolf recovery. Throughout the next three chapters, I underscore that at the root of the controversy are conflicting values about the ideological, social, and geographical

priorities that should be given to human land uses. Mexican wolf reintroduction serves as a catalyst for people to articulate these values, which many times otherwise would remain unspoken.

Making a Living on the Land

David Brown, a former wildlife biologist for the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) and the author of the most detailed book on Mexican gray wolves to date, wrote, “In few places in the world has the wolf been so much in conflict with a region’s dominant land use as in the Southwest” ([1983] 2002: 1). What Brown had in mind was livestock production. Hunting, mining, logging, and urban sprawl have all done their part to shape the land and the constraints on wildlife in the Southwest, but the importation of livestock to the region brought with it inevitable conflict with wolves. More than this, it nearly proved to be their extinction.

When Brown first published *The Wolf in the Southwest* in 1983, one year after a government recovery team submitted their report on the feasibility of reintroduction, he fully expected wolves to “pass on” and that his “summation” would be “the main testimony of the wolf’s presence in the Southwest” ([1983] 2002: 6).¹ Such would not be the case, but it was by the narrowest of margins that Mexican wolves survived. Perhaps even more astounding, given that eradication efforts were a recent memory – a generation’s length, at most – was their later reintroduction to the wild in 1998. Their recovery, as expressed to me numerous times by different persons whom I interviewed, is not a foregone conclusion.² The conflict continues over

¹ Even in the epilogue of the 2002 edition, Brown ends with a bit of pessimism about the recovery program’s future, suggesting, among other things, that Mexican wolf behavior has been compromised and that he may have to wait for wolves to disperse from the northern Rockies before the Southwest has any chance at a viable, wild population of wolves.

² These feelings are heightened, no doubt, by the failure of the program to reach its targeted recovery goals. The reported 2007 year-end count of Mexican wolves in the wild was fifty-two, with four known breeding pairs. The projected count for 2006, as listed in the 1996 final Environmental Impact Statement, was 102 wolves with a

land use, concerns about protecting domestic animals against a territorial predator, and the stability of rural communities – with all of these issues bound together by variant narratives and interpretations of history.

The near extinction of the Mexican wolf was never simply a matter of ranchers killing wolves. Nor was it simply about economics. Killing wolves was believed to be a necessary means of securing the land. A way of making a living was also a way of life, entwined with theories and myths of human dominance and mediated by affinity for place. Ideological battles about wolves were also battles about land, and Mexican wolves were fated to negotiate their way through these contrary topographies inscribed with competing and incompatible human values.

Mexican gray wolves (*Canis lupus baileyi*), a smaller, genetically distinct subspecies of gray wolf, were never found in staggering numbers in the Southwest, particularly in comparison to populations of gray wolves in other parts of the country.³ This subspecies is most adapted to the relatively dry, forested areas of the high desert (mountainous areas above 4500 feet), and, like predators in similar biomes, their size and numbers reflect lower prey densities that are spread out over large areas (Ames [1982] 2005: 122-123; Brown [1983] 2002: 19-22; Parsons 1998: 800-801; MW 2005: TC-17, 18).

minimum of 18 breeding pairs. Statistics are available online: http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/pdf/MW_popcount.pdf (accessed 27 April 2008).

³ Adult Mexican wolves weigh between fifty and ninety-nine pounds, compared to the eighty to one-hundred twenty pounds typical of other types of gray wolves (MW 2005: TC-1). According to John Oakleaf, the Mexican wolf field team projects coordinator (2002-), Mexican wolves are 44% smaller in body size than northern gray wolves (in Povilitis *et al.* 2006; see also FWS 1996: iv). On the genetic make-up of Mexican gray wolves, see Wayne *et al.* (1992), Hedrick *et al.* (1997), and Garcia-Moreno *et al.* (1996). For estimates of New Mexico's historical carrying capacity for wolves, see Parsons (1998), who, drawing on Bednarz (1988), puts the total number at approximately fifteen hundred. The Mexican wolf Final Rule (FWS 1998a) claims a population “numbering in the thousands before European settlement” (1752). If in the thousands, then it was likely the low thousands; see Brown (2002: 17-19) for early naturalists' impressions about the low numbers of wolves and the lack of places named for wolves, and on smaller pack size, see pp. 139-141.

The Southwestern landscape would and will support wolves, but not huge moving rivers of them. Two major deserts, the Sonoran and the Chihuahuan, intersect with much of *baileyi*'s historic range. Only those unfamiliar with this region, however, can conjure images of a desert wasteland.⁴ These lands are water-dependent but they are also biologically diverse, and until well into the twentieth century humans who were adapted to these environmental constraints have thrived, like wolves, in relatively modest numbers.⁵

The earliest listings of wolf subspecies in the Southwest divided wolf populations into five subspecies groups (Young and Goldman 1944: 411-416; Hall and Kelson 1959). The Mexican wolf was the southernmost of these subspecies, with a range extending from central Mexico into only the lower portions of New Mexico and Arizona. Doubt was cast upon the distinctions between these subspecies groups due to limited or inconclusive data, and in the early 1980s, adjustments to Southwestern subspecies boundaries were proposed that reflected fewer listings.⁶

⁴ Environmental historians who have studied Western regions (and regionalism) have pointed out that though aridity is a prominent environmental limit in the West, environmental unpredictability, diversity, extremity and variability – rather than simply aridity – are better starting points for integrating human culture and climate in scholarly narratives. For an erudite exchange about this topic, see Neel (1996) and Flores (1996).

⁵ One environmental factor above all others figured most prominently in the lack of large-scale human habitation: water. When Spanish explorers arrived in the Southwest in the sixteenth century, Puebloan peoples were already practicing water-diversion agriculture in addition to dryland farming and water-harvesting techniques (DuMars *et al.* 1984). These techniques along with Spanish practices were combined to form the *acequia* system (Rivera 1999). *Acequias* are communal irrigation canals (more literally, “water ditches”) used to divert water into arable lands for farming; it also refers to any community that utilizes such canals. Geologist and civil war veteran John Wesley Powell was the first Anglo to conduct a scientific expedition down the Colorado River (in 1869, with a second trip in 1872), and based on his experiences he proposed a watershed plan for the arid West – a plan that was summarily rejected at the time in favor of more established patterns of eastern settlement. His vision for the West is being revived in some circles as a feasible plan whose time has come (see, e.g., McAllister 2000). Some scholars believe that Powell's arguments were influenced by *acequia* systems (see Hicks and Peña 2003). For more on water uses and management in the Southwest, especially the contrasts between locally based watershed efforts and federal damming projects throughout the West, see Worster (1985), Clark (1987), Pisani (1996), MacDonnell (1999).

⁶ In part, this reassessment was prompted by the language of the ESA (1973), which calls for listings of subspecies as well as species, and critical habitat in their ranges. For commentary on the scant physical evidence for subspeciation and the reasoning behind reducing the numbers of North American subspecies, see Mech (2001: 14-16). In the 1982 recovery plan (Ames [1982] 2005: 108), Bogan and Mellhop's (1980) findings were used to endorse a reintroduction plan for *baileyi* into suitable habitat north of what was formerly considered this subspecies' historic range. Later studies confirmed such a designation (see Nowak 2003: 244-47). Discrepancies over the “native” lands of the Mexican gray wolf, as is noted in chap. 6, has been one argument against their reintroduction to

It is difficult to be certain about subspeciation among wolves in the Southwest since so little physical evidence remains, but, as Brown noted, “such evolutionarily selected differences, if real, would have broken down with the widespread introduction of livestock to the Southwest after 1880 and the reduction of native ungulates” ([1983] 2002: 9). In 1996, the “probable” outer limits of Mexican gray wolf range, based on their dispersal capabilities, were extended northward as far as Albuquerque, New Mexico (see Fig. 4-1).⁷

Livestock and “Civil” Society

Human population growth in the Southwest has been tethered to finding ways to harness the resources of arid and semiarid lands on scales of increasing intensity, and was facilitated first by livestock in the 1800s, rail transport in the early 1880s, and large-scale water reclamation in the 1950s and 1960s.⁸ According to historian Dan Flores, this meant, “For the past 200 years – actually 400 years if you count the first Spanish colonies planted along the Rio Grande in northern New Mexico – the human inhabitants of the American West have been dismantling and simplifying the place piece by piece” (1998: 59).

In the West generally, wolves sporadically conflicted with cattle ranching interests beginning with Spanish exploration and settlement, but this conflict was exacerbated by the

the Blue Range. It has also been evidence for some of the need to introduce them to their “true” historic habitats. For a critique of the “extension” of *baileyi*’s historic range, see Brown ([1983] 2002: 6-9); Robinson (2005b).

⁷ See FWS (1996: 1.2-1.3) for the justification behind these range limits; see also, Parsons (1996). In 2007, the ranges were further modified to reflect data on genetic intergrading between Mexican gray wolves and northern subspecies in southern Colorado and Utah (FWS 2007c: 44067; Leonard *et al.* 2005; see Fig. 4-3).

⁸ For the impacts of livestock, see Starrs (1998), and Robinson (2005a); for a decidedly anti-ranching view, see Jacobs (1992). On how railroads and the invention of refrigeration moved the Southwest from more locally scaled production into the realm of national and international markets, see Truett (1997). For water reclamation and its impacts on the Southwest, see Worster (1985), Reisner (1993), Kenney (1997); and for damming projects on the Colorado River see Martin (1989), Farmer (1999), and McCulley (2001).

decimation of bison herds, which became widespread in the 1830s.⁹ Wolf populations may have expanded initially due to the bison slaughter, as they scavenged on the skinless carcasses left to rot on the open plains. With bison so reduced, by the late 1860s cattle were the dominant ungulate on the plains, and wolves turned to these domestic animals as a primary food source.¹⁰

The “wolf problem,” however, was about more than livestock depredation. It was nested within a larger concern about land acquisition, which in turn was nested within cultural valuations of who was properly entitled to such lands. Since wolves could not be readily “civilized,” their deaths were symptomatic of a larger desire to remove all offending obstacles. Sewell Newhouse, who designed a trap in the late 1800s that was used widely by Western forest rangers for capturing wolves, provided a summation of such attitudes when he commented that such traps were “the prow with which iron clad civilization is pushing back barbaric solitude, and is replacing the wolf with the wheat field, the library, and the piano” (Newhouse, in Busch 1998: 121).¹¹

Bringing agriculture and “high” culture to the West was not simply predicated on eliminating wolves, for there were also people in the way. In the late nineteenth century, Indian removal and wolf removal were fueled by a similar ideology – a wish, often framed as a mandate, to open Western lands to the more civilized hands of working whites. In a common

⁹ For a succinct history on the bison slaughter, the impacts of railroads, the international investment in beef, and its impact on wolves see Robinson (2005a: 6-37); for the anthropogenic, industrial, and environmental factors involved in bison eradication, as well as the underlying motives for diminishing Native American food sources and thereby increasing their dependence on the federal government, see Isenberg (2002b).

¹⁰ In Texas in the late nineteenth century, herds of largely unsupervised cattle may have also led to an increase in wolf numbers and an expansion of their territorial ranges (see Williams, in Brown [1983] 2002: 21; and the Southwest more generally, pp. 31, 42). For a collection of first-person accounts on the “wolfers” who made their boom-and-bust living in the mid to late nineteenth century by harvesting wolves from strychnine-laced bison carcasses, see McIntyre (1995: 53-74).

¹¹ Interestingly, Newhouse was part of the utopian Oneida community in up-state New York in the mid-1800s, and this was the place where such traps were first manufactured. For a description of Newhouse’s traps, see Young and Goldman (1944: 303, 382).

conflation of greater numbers signifying greater progress, one British entrepreneur and railroad financier explained in 1877, “sad as the fate of the Red Man is ... the savage is giving place to a higher and more civilised race. ...[I]n supplanting less than 300,000 wandering, debased, and half-naked savages we can people the self-same district with a population of many tens of millions of prosperous and highly civilised whites,” while likewise, “countless herds of buffalo, which formerly ranged the plains, will be superseded by treble their number of improved American cattle...” (Blackmore, in Robinson 2005a: 16).¹²

Killing off bison, and “replacing them” with livestock, of course had very direct ecological consequences.¹³ Also important was the cultural transition that went hand-in-hand with livestock importation, for as Brown noted, “By the late 1880s, the Southwest was one large livestock ranch” ([1983] 2002: 41). Given the historical animosity between ranchers and wolves, the dominant uses of land in the Southwest did not bode well for their future. In the Southwest, the Apaches were the last Indians that submitted to forced removal to reservations, late in the nineteenth century. The parallel governmental efforts at clearing the Southwest of both wolves and Indians has drawn comment from some observers: “To rid the Southwest of this ‘terror’ [wolves], a campaign requiring more than sixty years and millions of dollars was mounted – an

¹² William Blackmore (1827-1878) offers one representative view of the international interest in expanding American railroads so that Western lands and products could be better integrated into overseas markets (see Isenberg 2002b; Robinson 2005a: 16-28, 33; Truett 1997). His justifications for this process of land seizure were certainly not uniquely British.

¹³ Leopold noted these changes in the early 1920s, as he mustered an argument for some “fundamentals of conservation” in the Southwest (Leopold [1923] 1991: 88, 92-93). See also, Limerick (1987: 154-55), and Robinson (2005a: 42-43, 127-28). As early as 1894, Robinson noted, the interior secretary banned livestock from forest reserves to protect watersheds but did not have the political power to enforce such a prohibition, which was lifted in 1897 (2005a: 51-53).

effort almost as great as that devoted to neutralizing the Apaches” (Brown [1983] 2002: 19).

Unfortunately for them, wolves, unlike Indians, could not be made to farm or tend livestock.¹⁴

There were dissonant chords struck by a handful of people amidst the pounding national anthem of manifest destiny. Canadian-born Ernest Thompson Seton (1860-1946) was among the earliest North American writers to depict wolves in a favorable light and his influence on public sympathy at the turn of the twentieth century can not be underestimated, as several scholars have argued (e.g., Dunlap 1988, Lutts 1990, McDonald 1998, Isenberg 2002a). Seton spent a memorable period in northeastern New Mexico as a wolf-trapper and his direct contact with a handful of “outlaw” wolves gave him pause over whether wolves should be hunted until there were no more.

When Seton wrote about his experiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, his stories were not mere adventure tales; they were moralistic eulogies in which wolves were headlining actors in a tragic drama. In one of his most famous stories, “Lobo: The King of the Currumpaw,” with wording remarkably similar to Leopold’s later “green fire” narrative, Seton described the wolf Old Lobo after he had been lured into Seton’s well-placed traps by the scent of his lost mate, Blanca:

¹⁴ For a historian’s perspective on the correlation between bison slaughter and Indian confinement, predicated on social Darwinistic notions, see Isenberg (2002b); on the effort to Christianize/domesticate Indians through a combination of missionary agriculture and soul cultivation, see particularly pp. 127ff. On the federal push to break up native American communal land holdings, as a way of “liberating” the land for “proper” use, see Limerick (1987: 190-200). Given the associations between civilizing the land and eliminating “savagery,” perhaps it should come as no surprise that comparisons between native Americans and wolves colored government rhetoric. For example, J. Stokley Ligon, the son of a Texas sheep rancher and the first New Mexico-Arizona district supervisor for the USBS, was responsible for publishing annual reports summarizing the progress of his team. These reports, valuable for the statistical information they provide, also reflect attitudes about the kind of campaign being waged: “The wolf situation is one that will require intensive organized effort until the last animal is taken, not only in Texas and New Mexico, but in every state where they find suitable harbors and when this accomplished, we will have to guard the gateways to Mexico so long as there is a supply in that country. The *gray wolf tribe* will die hard to the last hybrid ...” (Ligon [1920] 1995: 183-84, emphasis mine). The gray wolf “tribe,” perhaps like Geronimo’s Apache warriors a few decades prior in the same region, of course resisted their “defeat,” but the impacts of government intervention were evident by late 1910s: “There are a few stragglers [wolves] in the state drifting and being drifted, *hunting their lost tribe*, or endeavoring to avoid the hunters’ tricking devices, most of them having lost feet in traps...” (Ligon [1919] 1995: 182, my emphasis).

His *eyes glared green with hate and fury*, and his jaws snapped with a hollow “chop,” as he vainly endeavored to reach me and my trembling horse. . . . We threw to our victim a stick of wood which he seized in his teeth, and before he could relinquish it our lassos whistled through the air and tightened on his neck. Yet before *the light had died from his fierce eyes*, I cried, “Stay, we will not kill him; let us take him alive to the camp” ([1898] 1998: 57, my emphasis).¹⁵

This “stay” was short; Lobo died shortly after capture, but in Seton’s story he went to the grave like a sacrificial Christ figure.¹⁶

Despite the sympathetic accounts of nature writers such as Seton and others who viewed Indian “lore” as something to champion alongside the courageous virility of wolves, the dominant thrust to civilize the land remained enshrined in political institutions and national sentiment in the early twentieth century.¹⁷ Middle-class projects of nature appreciation that led urban dwellers to partake in the refreshments of the “wild” were popular enough to lead to some protections for particular animal species. However, the *parks*, National or otherwise, in which

¹⁵ The book within which this story was included, *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898), went through nine printings in the year and a half following its release. It is difficult to say how much Leopold’s own depiction of the wolf’s “green fire” was consciously influenced by Seton’s “Lobo,” but Leopold did note in the unpublished forward to *A Sand County Almanac* that “As a boy, I had read, with intense sympathy, Seton’s masterly biography of a lobo wolf, but I nevertheless was able to rationalize the extermination of the wolf by calling it deer management. I had to learn the hard way that excessive multiplication is a far deadlier enemy to deer than any wolf” ([1947] 1995: 324).

¹⁶ Seton’s description of Old Lobo’s final moments is remarkably reminiscent of Jesus’ silence before Pilate: “We tied his feet securely, but he never groaned, nor growled, nor turned his head. Then with our united strength were just able to put him on my horse. His breath came evenly as though sleeping, and his eyes were bright and clear again, but did not rest on us. Afar on the great rolling mesas they were fixed, his passing kingdom, where his famous band was no scattered. . . . I set meat and water beside him, but he paid no heed. He lay calmly on his breast, and gazed with those steadfast yellow eyes away past me . . . [W]hen the morning dawned, he was lying there still in his position of calm repose, his body unwounded, but his spirit was gone – the old King-wolf was dead” ([1898] 1998: 57-58).

¹⁷ On Seton’s “Native American-style pantheism” (Lutts 1990: 157) and other nature writers who, influenced by the Romantic and Transcendental movements, looked to Indians as children of nature, see Deloria 1998 and Lutts 1990: 156-61. Seton founded the Woodcraft Indian club (and later co-founded the Boy Scouts) to teach young boys the ways of the woods, and published directly about Indian lore, outside of the nature writing genre, in such works as the *Gospel of the Red Man: An Indian Bible* (1939). On George Catlin as a forerunner to such views, see Limerick 1987: 181-188. Catlin was actually the first to suggest that lands be set aside as national parks, including a representative sample of Indians within them. The paternalism of keeping around such “wild” specimens, however, arguably had more to do with nostalgia for an uncorrupted American society than it did for the well being of native Americans themselves. As Limerick noted, “A great deal of Catlin’s sentiment for these properly noble Indians had more to do with what they were not than with what they were. . . . [O]stensibly describing the Indians, Catlin was actually saying more about his discontent with American society. He handled Indian virtues like darts thrown to deflate American pretensions” (1987: 183).

these animals dwelt were largely considered beneficial for *human* recreational and spiritual uplift. In their limited bounds certain wild animals could have their relative autonomy, but in the “real world” of commerce and production the participation of wolves and Indians was not welcome.¹⁸ While Seton’s lifework is important, and is representative of a stream of thought that would acquire greater resonance as time passed, at the turn of the twentieth century it was still submerged within the rapid flows of a wider river whose force washed Indians into reservations and wolves toward extinction.¹⁹ It was premature to lament the loss of an animal that very few people, conservationists included, thought was of benefit to humans.

Government Interventions: From “Essentially Eliminated” to “Nonessential Experimental”

As they had in the past, at the turn of the twentieth century, wolves seemed to “define the periphery of a man’s power,” staying just outside of a rifle’s range (Robinson 2005a: 31). Something more was needed; a final organizational push of a magnitude only possible at the federal level. The newly created U.S. Forest Service was involved with wolf eradication by 1905, but government involvement with predator control became far more coordinated and

¹⁸On the increasing popularity of nature tourism in the nineteenth century, see Sears 1989. On legal protections for game and nongame animals, as these protections relate to nature preservation and conservation, see Dunlap 1988. See also citations in chap. 1, n. 20, and chap. 3, n. 20. For an excellent treatment of the “dual reservation” system of National Parks and Indian reservations, see Spence 1999.

¹⁹ For how this relates to the Progressive political movement, as a social and moral campaign, see Worster ([1977] 1994: 262-274). Gifford Pinchot, whose legacy includes the founding of the first school for forestry in the United States at Yale in 1900, was a tireless evangelizer for managing national forests as resources for the public good. The early statement of purpose for the school expresses well the nationalistic sentiment of the Progressive management philosophy: “American foresters trained by Americans in American ways for the work ahead in American forests” (in Fladler 1974: 9). The goal in forest and game management in the early twentieth century and beyond continued to be “sustained yield” of forest “products.” Wolves were considered detrimental to such a cause, as they took valuable “resources” (e.g., deer) that could otherwise be harvested by humans. For a good example of this philosophy from Leopold’s early writings, see “Wild Lifers vs. Game Farmers: A Plea for Democracy in Sport” ([1919] 1990: 54-60) and his argument for wilderness preservation in “The Wilderness and Its Place in Forest Recreational Policy” ([1921] 1990: 146-151).

potent in the early twentieth century with the creation and growth of the United States Bureau of Biological Survey (USBS).²⁰

USBS involvement in wolf eradication was not based on disinterested motives. Similar to Seton, though through federal appropriations rather than book sales, the USBS turned the deaths of wolves into a money-maker:

During 1890-1930, the perception of the wolf by the U.S. public and Congress was strongly influenced by accounts of outlaw wolves that allegedly killed stock in large numbers. Many of these accounts were embellished and were developed, at least in part, by members of the U.S. Biological Survey to generate and maintain funding for their programs (Fritts *et al.* 2003: 294).

As a region, the Southwest was critical to the development of the USBS's importance. "In fact," Brown wrote, "the predator control arm of the biological survey was instigated in the Southwest – primarily in New Mexico by Vernon E. Bailey, then staff biologist for the bureau's Biological Investigations Division, and J. Stokley Ligon" ([1983] 2002: 3).

Vernon Bailey, the man from whom the Mexican gray wolf received its Linnaean classification (*Canis lupus baileyi*), was a biologist who had a long career with the USBS and its predecessor agencies, dating all the way back to 1887 when the USBS was known as the Office of Economic Ornithology and Mammology. Bailey authored some of the early reports from his post in New Mexico, documenting the increasing federal effort to curtail wolf numbers and promoting various methods by which wolves could be "controlled," including "finding the dens of young [wolves]." As he put it, "In no other way can the number of wolves be kept down so surely and so economically as by destroying the young in the breeding dens" (Bailey [1907] 1995: 152). Bailey knew from experience:

²⁰ The Division of Biological Survey was founded in 1896 and became the Bureau of Biological Survey in 1905. In 1940 it would be re-named under the influence of Stanley Young to the now-familiar U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. For an excellent history of the politicking behind the name changes, and the relocation of the FWS and its predecessors under different departments, see Robinson (2005a, esp. pp. 56-61, 282-287).

A stout hook on the end of a stick will sometimes be very useful in getting the young out of crevices between the rocks or from side chambers out of reach. ... One litter of 8 pups taken from a cavity under a large boulder when they are about 6 weeks old fought as fiercely as their strength and puppy teeth would admit, but they could not cut through my buckskin glove ([1907] 1995: 153).

Bailey's reports provide a window into the methodologies and attitudes prominent during the heyday of wolf eradication. Particularly notable is the single-mindedness with which the Survey operated; "constant and concerted effort" needed to be applied, according to Bailey ([1907] 1995: 150), and by 1908 he could report that the "war against these pests" had resulted in the taking of three hundred fifty-nine wolves in the national forests of Arizona and New Mexico.²¹

According to Brown, wolves were "essentially eliminated" in New Mexico in the mid-1920s, and by 1944 there were no more wild-born wolves in Arizona ([1983] 2002: 25). By way of comparison, in 1923 Aldo Leopold listed the total population of cattle at two million and sheep at three million in Arizona and New Mexico combined ([1923] 1991: 88). Some wolves continued to use well-established territorial "runways" (Young and Goldman 1944: 81-84), crossing from Mexico into the United States until the 1950s, but they had to dodge bullets, traps, and poisons to do so. As Bailey observed, as early as 1907, wolves had to "run the gauntlet" ([1907] 1995: 155) if they were to live into maturity. Ultimately the gauntlet thrown down by the USBS proved too much to overcome. Wolves crossing into the United States from Mexico in the early twentieth century represented the remnants of a fragmented population well on its way to extinction.

²¹See Brown ([1983] 2002: 48), who noted that "Wolf catches would never be as high in these two southwestern states again." Government estimates indicated nine-hundred wolves killed from 1915-1925 (see Fig. 4-3; Parsons 1998: 801). Though this represents a significant number of wolves that were killed, statistics of kills from other states underscores how Mexican wolves were not nearly as numerous as grey wolves in more northern climes. For instance, in Wyoming alone, 20,819 wolves were killed between 1896 and 1907 (Wilmot and Clark 2005: 143).

When isolated alarm bells began to be rung among wildlife biologists, it was almost too late. In an otherwise scientific accounting of the wildlife in Mexico, A. Starker Leopold (Aldo's son) adopted a normative tone at the close of his report on Mexican wolves, recommending that "definite provision" should be made to prevent their complete extermination (because they were both "interesting" and "native"). Sounding as though he had digested the lessons of his father, the younger Leopold wrote that "a natural balance is advantageous to both the deer and the wolves in the long run, and it is erroneous to suppose that we must destroy the large predators in order to protect the game populations in wilderness areas" ([1959] 2005: 69). Practical considerations may have caused him to stop short of advocating for a comparable arrangement in the United States. He did, however, assert that,

Setting aside a great national park or wilderness preserve in the northern Sierra Madre Occidental would be one of the best ways of maintaining at least a fragment of the shrinking population. The Mexican lobo is as much a part of the lore of the country as the feathered serpent, and we would be poor-spirited indeed if we could not find at least one place in Mexico where the wolf may persist, safe from the incessant warfare of the cattlemen ([1959] 2005: 69-70).

By the late 1970s, some stirrings began for recovery of the Mexican wolf in the United States. Prompted by the directives of the Endangered Species Act (16 USC §1533[f]), along with the listing of the Mexican gray wolf as an endangered subspecies in 1976, a Mexican Wolf Recovery Team was formed in 1979 to study the feasibility of protecting and/or reintroducing the Mexican wolf back into the Southwest. The greatest challenge facing wolf recovery at that time was that there were few Mexican wolves remaining. Not a single wolf had been confirmed in the southwestern United States since 1970 (FWS 1996: 1.5), and while those interested suspected there were some in Mexico, no one knew with certainty how many isolated populations existed. The person most likely to know, Roy McBride, a seasoned trapper and "hound man," estimated based on his experiences that there were still around fifty wolves south

of the border (McBride 1980 [2005]: 105). In 1977, McBride was hired by the government to live trap wolves for a captive breeding program; he was able to return from Durango and Chihuahua, Mexico with only five wolves (FWS 1998a: 1753, MW 2005: TC-2; cf. Robinson 2005a: 348-350, Brown 2002: 5, 166-171).

While these wolves were safely ensconced at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (ASDM) in Tucson, Arizona, the lobos had to run another “gauntlet” in the early 1980s, though this time it was a genetic one. With only one female among the five wild-caught wolves, the first litter produced in 1978 did not have any female offspring that lived. A second litter was produced in 1981, this time with three females who would all later have their own litters, ensuring that Mexican wolves would not become extinct in captivity, though their future in the wild was a question yet to be answered. Two additional lineages of captive-raised wolves (one from the Aragon Zoo in Mexico City, and another, the “Ghost Ranch” lineage, which originated at the ASDM) were certified in July 1995 (FWS 1996: 1.5; Parsons 1998: 802), which helped increase genetic diversity significantly (see Hedrick *et al.* 1997).

Despite the release of the Recovery Team’s report in 1982, progress on its implementation languished. As the 1982 Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan presciently stated,

Actions taken against a predator that causes loss of dollars and food and that competes with man for wild prey inevitably take on the emotional overtones of a crusade. ...By the time wolf numbers were so drastically reduced that the survivors often bore individual names, the need to blot out those few survivors certainly stemmed as much from emotional, as from economic, reasons. Any recovery effort must still deal with the residues of that emotion (Ames [1982] 2005: 110-111).

These emotions coursed deeply through rural areas generally, and the livestock lobby in New Mexico and Arizona in particular, which was far too powerful to provide a resounding welcome for wolves in the Southwest.

Terry Johnson, the nongame director for the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), whose actions and political savvy were critical to moving the program forward on a state level throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, remarked that despite the listing of Mexican gray wolves as endangered in 1976, the 1982 recovery plan was “nothing but a piece of paper on the shelf” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ). Though “you might write a happy-talk article about wolves every once and a while,” Johnson observed, the idea of wolf recovery “really hadn’t captured the public fancy at that point” (ibid.). Curiously, wolf recovery advocates may have Ronald Reagan to thank, who appointed James Watt as the U.S. Secretary of the Interior in 1981, a post that Watt used (or abused, depending on the perspective) to its fullest until he resigned in 1983. Watt stoked the ire of environmentalists and others because of his pro-development stance for public lands, as he favored opening up as much as possible for economic use. According to Johnson, because Watt “was merciless, ruthless, and absolutely brilliantly capable of making it happen ... wolves and grizzlies and things became wonderful icons for the whole way to try to thwart the evil empire” (ibid.).

Johnson used the environmental backlash against Watt to quietly move discussion about wolf reintroduction forward in Arizona. Whereas the FWS still lacked the political momentum it needed, in 1987 the AGFD commission approved a twelve-step process for reintroducing endangered species (Fig. 4-4), and Johnson was empowered to begin looking at appropriate sites in the state for reintroducing wolves. Also beginning in 1987, public meetings were held in Arizona as a means to hash out some of these early suggestions for reintroduction sites and gather public feedback.²²

²² Speaking with Johnson – and later with a few others who were closest to the program’s behind-the-scene machinations – was an education in how important a handful of people and decisions were to Mexican wolves getting on the ground again. Particularly critical to moving the process forward was the state-level initiative in Arizona – especially considering that the state of Texas completely refused to participate, and New Mexico only

Still, it took the threat of a lawsuit to lubricate the gridlocked federal machinery. In 1990, the Wolf Action Group, a coalition of environmental organizations led by the Sierra Club, sued the FWS for failing to actively pursue wolf recovery (*Wolf Action Group, et al. v. United States, et al.*). A settlement reached in 1993 directed that the Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan would be pursued as expeditiously as possible (FWS 1996: 1.1). Doubts remained. In the Southwest, there had never been a reintroduction of a carnivore as large as wolves, who would need an appropriately sizable ungulate prey base. This factor alone meant that reintroducing wolves required a broad, landscape-based approach. In addition, though habitat protection was unnecessary because of extensive National Forest and wilderness areas, reintroduced wolves were expected to roam far and wide. Most problematic, the suggested primary recovery sites with such an available prey base were also in areas that were extensively grazed by another, domesticated variety of ungulate (livestock), setting up an intense conflict of interests.

To allay concerns from local residents about the restrictions implied by an endangered listing, in the early 1990s a newly cast Mexican wolf recovery team took advantage of a provision in the ESA (as amended in 1982) by which species could be listed as “nonessential experimental” (NEP) if they met certain requirements.²³ This proved a critical feature of the

offered White Sands Missile Range as a reintroduction site, an area which was projected to be able to support around twenty wild wolves. For a personal account that provides, among other things, one citizen’s valuable first-hand perspective of the political issues in the decade prior to the reintroduction, especially in Arizona, see Holaday (2003).

²³ “Nonessential experimental” classification (ESA 1973, §10[j]) is a category that allows active federal management of wolves, and, for citizens, (with restrictions) the killing of wolves caught in the act of livestock depredation. The following, from the 1996 EIS, outlines the basics of this classification: “The experimental population rule provisions ... are largely measures to mitigate the potential impacts of the proposal by providing the greatest degree of management flexibility and the least impact on private activity consistent with wolf recovery. One mitigation measure is the allowance of non-injurious harassment of wolves and, in limited situations, killing them if they are observed attacking livestock, although the actual number of observed attacks is expected to be small. ... Captured problem or nuisance wolves will be returned to captivity or to a distant location in the wolf recovery area, pursuant to the cooperative management plan. ... The FWS will permanently remove from the wild or, as a last resort, euthanize any wolves exhibiting a consistent pattern of livestock depredation (three or more confirmed kills within one year in primary wolf recovery zones and two or more in other areas)” (FWS 1996: 2.16).

Mexican wolf reintroduction. Because of the sizable captive population of Mexican wolves (which by 1997 totaled one-hundred forty-eight individuals in twenty-five different U.S. facilities, with another twenty-nine wolves in five Mexican facilities [FWS 1998a]), it was determined that Mexican wolves reintroduced into the wild would not require the full protections accorded to animals listed solely as “endangered.”²⁴ The same provisions that were in effect and seemed to be working well in Yellowstone and Idaho, where wolves were released in 1995 under the NEP classification, were thus viewed as an attractive possibility for the Southwest.

The goal of the FWS for Mexican gray wolf recovery, as stated in the 1996 final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), was to have at least one hundred wild wolves in a small portion (5000 mi²) of the wolves’ former historic range by the year 2005.²⁵ The “preferred alternative,” which was eventually approved, was to release Mexican wolves as an NEP within the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). From their “primary recovery zone,” Mexican wolves would be allowed to disperse to the “secondary recovery zone,” an area inclusive of the Apache and Gila National Forests (see Fig. 4-6). If wolves ventured outside of the BRWRA, into the much larger Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA), they were to be captured only in the case of livestock depredations or if they established territories that were completely outside the boundaries of the BRWRA. If on private lands anywhere within the BRWRA and the MWEPA, at the request of the landowner, they could be captured, re-located,

“Critical habitat” designation – restricting specific areas to use and/or development – is also unnecessary under the “nonessential experimental” listing (ESA, §10j, C[ii]). Instead of “critical habitat,” Mexican wolves had “recovery zones” that were subject to the multiple-use policies of National Forest lands.

²⁴ Additionally, four years of surveys in Mexico, and surveys in the proposed recovery area as well, confirmed what was expected: there were no Mexican wolves remaining in the wild (FWS 1998a: 1754).

²⁵ The final EIS provides a “preferred alternative” (Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area) location for release, as well as other suggestions and commentary on why areas are more or less suitable for reintroduction. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt issued his Record of Decision on 3 April 1997, which confirmed the “preferred alternative” as the one that would be implemented, among the alternatives listed in the final EIS. When wolves were released in 1998, it was under the provisions of the “preferred alternative.”

returned to captivity, or otherwise “controlled” by government agents; or, if attacking livestock on private lands, they could be killed by livestock owners or their employees.²⁶

The reintroduction of Mexican wolves was understood as a “first step” toward recovery (FWS 1998a: 1752). Presumably, if a “self-sustaining population” (FWS 1998a: 1753) was to be achieved, other adjustments would need to be made as the program continued, including issues over boundaries, sites for initial releases, dispersing wolves, and especially what population levels would be sufficient to downlist wolves to threatened status and – the ultimate recovery goal for any species – to delist them from ESA protection altogether.²⁷ Mexican wolves had gone from being “essentially eliminated” in first decades of the twentieth century, as Brown put it, to being classified as a “nonessential experimental” population in need of reintroduction by the end of the same century.²⁸ At the time, however, it still remained a daunting proposition to get Mexican wolves out of captive facilities and on the ground again.

The Gathering Storm

Though the reintroduction program appeared that it was cutting through the bureaucratic red tape necessary to release Mexican wolves, resistance remained strong. Public feedback, which is included in the final EIS, was varied. The following comments offer a sample of

²⁶ The BRWRA covers an area of 6854 mi², 95% of which is National Forest land. An additional 2500 mi² was added to the BRWRA when the White Mountain Apache Tribe agreed to allow wolf recolonization of the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in 2002 (MW 2005: TC-3).

²⁷ As of early 2008, population goals and the redefinition of boundaries were still undecided, much to the frustration of environmentalists, who see this lack of definition as an indication that the program will be allowed to languish until political will for Mexican wolves is unequal to local resistance. Local government personnel are also perturbed since this hinders their ability to give clear target goals to the ranchers with whom they interact.

²⁸ Revealing an understanding of the difficulties imposed on the average individual in wading through ESA legalese, one response in the EIS sums up the salient points of nonessential designation: “The ‘experimental nonessential’ terminology in section 10(j) of the Act is confusing. It does not mean that the animal is not near extinction and it does not mean the reintroduction is just an experiment; It is a classification designed to make the reintroduction and management of endangered species more flexible and responsive to public concerns to improve the likelihood of successfully recovering the species” (1996: 5.100).

objections that reveal various suspicions about the necessity of reintroduction efforts (FWS 1996: 5.102-103, 112, 132-133):

“Wolf recovery is just to appease a few radical environmentalists.”

“Eliminating wolves was necessary to allow settling of the west and their absence is an important aspect of the ‘custom and culture’ and history of the rural areas involved.”

“Humans have dominion over the animals and that includes not restoring an animal that is detrimental to humans.”

“There may not be a verified record of wolves attacking humans, but, it is only a matter of time and you will have one or more.”

“The wolves in captivity are not genetically pure Mexican wolves, they are inbred, hybrid, and they are unlikely to be viable in the wild, thus unlikely to further the conservation of the subspecies...”

“Captive wolves are adapted to people and will seek them out if they are released and their behavior will be abnormal and cause the program to fail.”

“The Mexican wolf is a dangerous animal which kills just to be killing and does not stop until he kills all available.”

“The FWS already has released captive Mexican wolves in the Southwest.”

Frustration was perhaps most frequently directed at the government and its employees. Despite FWS efforts to solicit comments and sponsor meetings in areas that would be most affected by wolf reintroduction, some people felt (and still feel) that their input, if it was against reintroduction, was to no avail since reintroduction is mandated by law. As one rancher commented, “The federal government shouldn’t be up here poking wolves down people’s throats. I mean, they go out like, ‘We’re gonna do it whether you like it or not.’ I have heard that at every wolf meeting I’ve been to” (Joe Cannon, interview, 7 June 2007, near York, AZ).

Ranchers had the most to lose. Typical of Western grazing patterns, for ranchers who leased lands where wolves were reintroduced, their private holdings were typically small

arrangements abutting large allotments within the forests.²⁹ The need for large amounts of land is too expensive and private holdings simply too small in the semi-arid lands of the high desert to offer enough forage for livestock without such “supplements.” In the BRWRA, in 1993, 82,600 head of cattle grazed 69% of the area (Parsons 1998: 802), and 50% of the livestock allotments in forest lands were grazed year-round (primarily in the lower elevations of New Mexico; see FWS 1996: 3.11).³⁰

The recovery team expected conflict, but was hopeful that it could be mitigated by management provisions and the promise of monetary compensation for livestock losses provided by Defenders of Wildlife (FWS 1996: 2.17, 5.110).³¹ The “nonessential” designation was of particular importance in allowing management flexibility. However, as one author put it,

The experimental population provisions of the ESA are intended to reduce the pragmatic opposition to reintroducing endangered species ... [minimizing] the effect of the reintroduced animals on economic and recreational activities by reducing or eliminating the protection that the Act accords such species. ... But opposition to the reintroduction of wolves also has an emotional component that is little effected by the concrete statutory

²⁹ The arid and semi-arid conditions of Western ranching created types of ranching that differed greatly from the eastern United States, primarily in the necessary use of extensive amounts of land, which is often considered too marginal for other uses. According to geographer Paul Starrs (1998), trying to squeeze Western forms of ranching into Eastern-conceived legal policies has created a long legacy of conflict between Western ranchers and the federal government. That endangered species reintroduction and protection are federally initiated adds another layer of acrimony and distrust to an already tense debate over land use. For statistics on ranch size in the BRWRA, see MW (2005: SEC 3.2-3.4).

³⁰ There are five counties whose boundaries overlap with the BRWRA in New Mexico (Catron, Sierra, and Grant Counties) and Arizona (Apache and Greenlee Counties). The combined population in these counties (in 2003) accounts for 2% of the total population of the two states (MW 2005: SEC ES-1, 2), and the counties have an average population density of 4.5 people per square mile. While Arizona and New Mexico, like most Western states, experienced dramatic population growth in the last decade of the twentieth century (44%), the counties that are in the BRWRA increased by 11%.

³¹ Defenders of Wildlife has had a fund for such purposes since 1987. According to their literature, from 1987-2006, Defenders’ Bailey Wildlife Foundation Wolf Compensation Trust has made five-hundred thirty-four payments totaling \$729,638; about \$70,000 has been to New Mexico and Arizona ranchers. Defenders’ noted, “Our goal is to shift economic responsibility for wolf recovery away from the individual rancher and toward the millions of people who want to see wolf populations restored. When ranchers alone are forced to bear the cost of wolf recovery, it creates animosity and ill will toward the wolf. Such negative attitudes can result in illegal killing” (for information on this fund and other proactive carnivore conservation programs managed by Defenders, see: http://www.defenders.org/programs_and_policy/wildlife_conservation/solutions/index.php [accessed 18 May 2008]).

provisions. This is particularly true of wolves... The 1982 amendments to the ESA could address the utilitarian concerns by reducing land-use restrictions; the amendments could do nothing directly to reduce the symbolic dispute (Goble [2001] 2005: 135-136).³²

Indeed, this symbolic dispute had not faded, and as the day drew closer to reintroduce wolves, the rhetoric was ratcheted up a notch. David Parsons, who was the first FWS Mexican wolf recovery team coordinator (1990-1999), commented that he was “called everything imaginable, including the devil” (Parsons 2007b: 20). Showing his sense of humor – a near requisite for those who must endure the kind of public scrutiny that accompanies wolf reintroductions – he added, “I wore my hair long to conceal my horns” (ibid.). At another public meeting, Parsons was told: “God got rid of the wolf, and only God can put him back, and you’re not God.” He responded, “Well, I have to agree with you on that; I am not God” (interview, 16 July 2007, Albuquerque, NM).

Whether viewed as gods or devils, government employees had to be resilient. Dan Groebner, an AGFD nongame specialist who took his job in order to be a part of the recovery process, noted that, to a certain degree, he welcomed the divergent opinions. Groebner freely admitted that moving from his native Minnesota – where he studied wolves but “was preaching to the choir” – to Arizona was “more than he bargained for” (interview, 13 July 2007, Pinetop, AZ). However, he also felt that the media often blew the controversy out of proportion. He advised, “Don’t believe the media. This is the true story: We’ve met with ranchers, they’re not that bad. We’ve met with environmentalists, they’re not that radical. The media makes people look extreme just to sell papers or ads” (ibid.). From his perspective, “Trying to be in the middle, and bring the groups together is the most satisfying part of this job” (ibid.). Such a

³² While government employees and some environmentalists saw the nonessential experimental ruling as a concession that would allow greater levels of local tolerance, many of those for whom the nonessential experimental designation was designed – ranchers – have questioned its validity. One rancher told me that when “They introduced them as a nonessential experimental population that was telling us that they should not cause a change in our way of life, and they have caused a change in our way of life” (Darcy Ely, interview, 7 June 2007, Willcox, AZ).

mediating role also had a wider importance, for Groebner saw wolf recovery as sign that, “If we could make wolf recovery work around here all these other environmental problems may be a lot easier to tackle” (ibid.).

To make wolf recovery “work” was a tall order, however. Groebner noted that, “[T]he whole approval process, and the zones, the boundaries, everything was one grand compromise. Even with all these concessions ... [in the mid-90s] nobody ever thought this project would be approved” (ibid.). Such a frank admission may be reflective of resistance that came from other, perhaps unexpected, fronts. Opposition to wolf reintroduction was early expressed by the San Carlos, White Mountain, and Mescalero Apache tribes of New Mexico and Arizona. That the Nez Perce (Idaho) identified strongly with the plight of wolves, while southwestern tribes near reintroduction sites initially balked at reintroduction efforts and continue to do so, drives home the point Native Americans are not uniformly pro-wolf, but have their own particular historical ties to some animals (and not others) as well as sets of concerns about their economic well being.³³

Apaches, themselves migrants to the Southwest in the 1500s, have been fortunate enough to remain close to lands that are identified as traditional places of power, but certainly their economies and livelihoods have changed dramatically from former practices of seasonal hunting and gathering (Hilpert 1996). In addition to livestock being a major (even “traditional”) part of

³³ Interestingly, cultural ties that have been broken because of wolves’ absence may be showing signs of renewal among the White Mountain Apache. Krista Beazely, the White Mountain Apache tribal biologist responsible for coordinating efforts with the FWS, commented that her father, Joyner George sang a traditional Apache ritual hunting song at the 2002 signing ceremony, invoking the power of wolves (Tanglely 2003; Friederici [2002] 2005). It is also worth noting that a San Carlos Apache medicine man was originally scheduled to be present to bless the wolves’ release, but was asked not to by the tribal council the day before the release (David Parsons, interview, 16 July 2007, Albuquerque, NM).

Apache cultures, elk hunting is an especially big business on the San Carlos Reservation,³⁴ generating as much as a million dollars in annual revenue (Pavlik 1999: 138-139). This provides enough of an economic disincentive to question the wisdom of reintroduction. In addition, Native American nations continue to negotiate issues of sovereignty with federal and state governments, and based on past interactions, there are justifiable degrees of suspicion (see Pavlik 1999: 140ff; Nijhuis 2001). In 2002, the White Mountain Apaches did decide, by vote of their tribal council, to participate in the reintroduction program, as a joint partner in managing wolves that dispersed onto reservation land, but the debate among Apaches is ongoing.³⁵

Meeting Wolves Again for the First Time

Beginning on 26 January 1998, eleven wolves comprised of three family groups, selected on the basis of genetic patrimony and their exhibition of “wild” characteristics (e.g., avoidance of humans), were transferred in crates to their acclimatization pens in the Apache National Forest of eastern Arizona. The wolves would adjust for two months, fed with roadkilled elk and deer, before being allowed entrance into their much bigger “home.” On 29 March 1998, with a potential court injunction pending in New Mexico district federal court, which was later dropped, and in the midst of a snowstorm, Dave Parsons and Dan Groebner released the wolves.

During separate interviews, I asked them both about this moment. Groebner explained:

³⁴ In the lower elevations of the San Carlos Reservation, as opposed to the more mountainous regions of the White Mountain Apache Reservation, juniper and scrub oak vegetation dominates, and cattle ranching is a critical part of tribal life. The results of developing a cattle culture have been fairly remarkable; according to Bruce Hilpert, “The San Carlos Reservation produces more ‘cowboys’ than any area of comparable size in Texas or Oklahoma” and has “one of the best herds of range Herefords in the world” (1996: 87-88).

³⁵ The White Mountain Apache had been successful partners in wildlife management with state and federal agencies in the past (especially in managing Apache trout and Mexican spotted owl populations), even “widely recognized as wildlife conservation leaders” (Leon, in Tangle 2003), which makes the initial rejection of Mexican gray wolves more intriguing. As an example of how such decisions can fluctuate dramatically based on the constituents of a tribal council, on 6 December 1995 the White Mountain Apache Tribal Council voted unanimously to oppose Mexican gray wolf reintroduction (Pavlik 1999: 137-38); in 1998, the council reversed its decision, allowing wolves who dispersed to the 1.6 million acre Fort Apache Reservation a chance to establish themselves, and in 2002 the tribe finalized a wolf management plan and signed a formal agreement with the FWS.

The real significance, the chill down the spine event, was March 29 when we were able to open up the gates and let ‘em out. ... That was for me the more gratifying part rather than bringing them over with the cameras clicking ... These guys who had been in captivity for four or five generations had no problem with getting out of the pen. ... That was almost a sign to me that ... they were ready. It wasn't like they were captive dogs that were going to be waiting for handouts. That was the first sign that their instincts were alive and well, and that time in human captivity had barely scratched any of their instincts. ... They were still wild animals (interview, 13 July 2007, Pinetop, AZ).

Later in the interview, I asked Groebner what the high point of the program had been for him, and he revisited his feelings about the moment the wolves were released:

The peak would have to be the first initial release, and we realized “holy crap” all this years of meetings and getting pounded on by people... Just all of that finally coming to fruition was definitely the high point, and I don't think there will be anything that will top that. ... [T]he historical significance has kinda been hitting me as we go along (ibid.).

Parsons commented that it was a special moment, but as a Midwesterner (he grew up in Iowa), he did not get overly emotional at the time. Looking back, he said he sometimes marvels that they were actually able to carry it through. In his words, “The stars aligned” (interview, 16 July 2007).

Although some concerns were expressed prior to the reintroduction that wolves raised in captivity would lack the ability to hunt successfully, the Hawk's Nest pack killed an elk less than twenty days after their release, despite the availability of food supplements back at the location of their acclimation pen. Since the reintroduction began, indeed, the primary food of Mexican wolves has been elk (MW 2005: TC-1, 20), which is somewhat of a surprise since the difference in killing an eight-hundred pound elk versus taking down a sixty to eighty pound deer is one worth pausing over.³⁶

But if, as Parsons put it, “the stars aligned,” it was only momentarily. Like so many other instances in the story of Mexican wolves, their survival on the ground hung in the balance. The

³⁶ Expectations before the release were that the wolves would prey primarily on deer (FWS 1996: A-1, 4.2). For the environmental factors that may be responsible for such prey selection, see MW (2005: TC-1, 14-18).

precarious status of the wolves was not due to their ability to hunt or form packs. Parsons lamented, “The joy of the occasion would fade later that year under a cloud of wolf hatred, expressed in the shooting deaths of five of these Lobo pioneers. Before the end of the year, all remaining wolves were back in captivity” (2007b: 20). Parsons was referencing a stark situation: of the thirteen wolves initially released in the first year (the eleven originally released and an additional two females for mating purposes), five were illegally shot, and the remainder had to be re-captured to form new breeding pairs. In other words, for a short period of time, there were no free-roaming wolves on the ground after they were officially reintroduced.

During a second release, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt made a special trip to Arizona on 17 November 1998 to publicly affirm federal resolve for the program. Parsons described the importance of Babbitt’s affirmation of the program’s objectives:

When we did the second release, Babbitt came out again to make a statement that “we were going to make this work.” He didn’t believe that one specific use of public lands should override another ... and I agree with him. To exclude the wolves is unfair, the wrong policy, because it’s the only place we have for the wolf (interview, 16 July 2007, Albuquerque, NM).

Since then, the wolves have been able to gain a foothold in the wild. High rates of turnover have been the norm, however, and illegal killings remain a problem. On top of these illegal killings, government interventions for livestock depredations and boundary infractions have resulted in very few individual success stories in the wild population. Sandy Bahr, the Sierra Club outreach director for Arizona’s Grand Canyon chapter, has watched the ebbs and flows of the program with some trepidation:

What I would call the euphoria of the reintroduction – that was so cool, everyone was ecstatic – and when it was clear that the wolves were going to figure out how to be wild, that was cool as well, and when the first wild-born wolves reached adulthood, there were all these [benchmarks] that demonstrated it was going to work, it was going to happen. ...And then, in the last couple of years, I think from the conservation perspective, there is a real fear that it won’t [work], and not because the wolves can’t do it but because the people can’t (interview, 20 July 2007, Phoenix, AZ).

Even wolf advocates have had trouble maintaining energy. Several grassroots, citizen-run organizations and coalitions that had been instrumental in applying political pressure dissolved following the reintroduction. This may be attributable to feelings of a “mission accomplished,” but as Defenders of Wildlife representative Craig Miller noted,

They got scorched – this has been a long, hard, controversial campaign with a lot of let downs. Every decision that was supposed to have been made got delayed by three or four or five years, or oftentimes went the wrong way or was watered down with compromises. It’s been really disheartening to see the number of wolves that have been shot. Those coalitions were all run by volunteers. ...Life pulls them in other directions (interview, 8 June 2007, Tucson, AZ).

It was not just environmentalists that were troubled, however. Deep concerns about the program’s management led to the creation of the Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC) in October 2003, a power-sharing partnership between six lead agencies involved in recovery efforts.³⁷ Terry Johnson was the one who proposed the AMOC and has jokingly referred to it as “an atrocity,” and, as others have, taken to pronouncing the acronym as “amuck.” In his view, internal agency squabbles created tension that squandered progress from February 2001 to October 2003; wolves, in his words, had “taken it in the shorts in the meantime” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ). In 2003 alone, there were thirteen unlawful killings of wolves, with only one successful investigation.³⁸ Johnson believed it was not until January 2005 that the AMOC really started to function effectively, in part, due to the hiring of a new

³⁷ The six lead agencies are the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA-Forest Service (USFS), USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services (WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT).

³⁸ The FWS Office of Law Enforcement is responsible for investigating all wolf mortalities that occur in the wild. Effective law enforcement for illegal wolf killings has been difficult, however, even with substantial rewards for information. Contributing factors are the vast amounts of land comprising the recovery area, the lack of witnesses available for an illegal killing, and the resources available to pursue these crimes to the full extent. Thus far, only two incidents have been resolved. One resulted in a finding of self-defense, as a man shot a wolf who ventured near the area where he, his family, and his dog were camping. The other resulted in the conviction of one man, who was sentenced to four months in prison and six months of house arrest and community service. The maximum punishment for illegally killing a Mexican wolf is a fine of \$75,000 and imprisonment for a year (see MW 2005: ARPCC-105, 195, AC-2, 3; FWS 2006b; for different views of these incidents, see Walley [1998] 2005, Holaday 2003: 137-41, and Dollar [2002] 2005: 230).

FWS Mexican wolf program recovery coordinator, John Morgart, who took an interest in local outreach and embraced interagency collaboration. Though Morgart admitted that wolves “raise more passion than anything I’ve ever worked on,” he echoed others in saying, “I think we’ve reached a point in our own development that we’ve realized having complete ecosystems – or as complete as possible – is important. ...By returning these animals, we’re one step closer to recreating what we’ve basically lost” (Morgart, in Reese 2005).

In December 2005, the AMOC and the Interagency Field Team (IFT)³⁹ issued a five-year review of the project, a thick sheaf of documents containing several components, including administrative, technical, socioeconomic, and public comments sections, as well as the AMOC/IFT’s recommendations based on their findings. Out of these thirty-seven recommendations, one of the most pressing was to develop a more appropriate final rule since the boundaries stipulated in the original final rule (FWS 1998a) seemed to be keeping wolf numbers well below projected goals.⁴⁰ Developing a new rule, and soliciting public input, was a major concern throughout 2007 and much of the program’s success likely hangs on modification or elimination of the original boundaries.⁴¹

³⁹ The IFT is comprised essentially of the on-the-ground wolf biologists and public outreach personnel from the various agencies. The AMOC has been described as the “head” of the recovery team, that is, where the formal decision making takes place, while the IFT are the feet and hands of the project, with its members typically living on-site in towns near or within the recovery zone (primarily in Alpine, AZ).

⁴⁰ One rancher told me that this was the point in time when the government “had to start listening to us because the program was having its problems” (Darcy Ely, interview, Willcox, AZ, 7 June 2007). Johnson acknowledged that the program was certainly struggling at this point, but from his perspective, ranchers had always been involved in the public process.

⁴¹ On 7 August 2007, the FWS issued a notice of intent to change the 1998 final rule (FWS 2007c), as well as a new environmental impact statement and socio-economic assessment. Key issues under consideration included the desire to allow wolves to establish home territories outside of the BRWRA, greater release site flexibility, and definitional clarifications. As stated in this document, “The Service [FWS] is considering a potential amendment of the 1998 NEP final rule because we believe management constraints contained in that rule are too restrictive to meet management objectives ...” (FWS 2007c: 44068). Of particular concern were the internal and external boundaries of the BRWRA. The notice of intent also advertised twelve public informational sessions and scoping meetings to be held in November and December 2007. Background and updated information can be viewed online: www.mexicanwolfeis.org (accessed 30 April 2008).

A decade into Mexican wolf reintroduction, a matter of grave concern, especially for the wolves, is the boundaries of the recovery zones. This has been repeated in the three and five year reviews of the project, and noticed by those on all sides of the issue. However, while modifying or eliminating the current boundaries may alter the lines on current maps as well as alleviate some of the more chronic management problems, it will do little to rub clean the boundaries that cut across and between the various cultural perceptions of how wolves, land, and humans are ultimately related.

Terry Johnson said it well: “It’s not about wolves. It’s about people. Always has been, always will be. And it’s about people and values clashes, and the wolf fits into that scenario beautifully” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ). Like Johnson, many people recognize that something deeper courses under the rhetoric about wolf reintroduction, most often stamped with the amorphous term “values.” It is worth examining such values more closely to gain a sense of what is at stake for those who have such difficulty agreeing about the wolves who, once again, are struggling to survive in the Southwest.

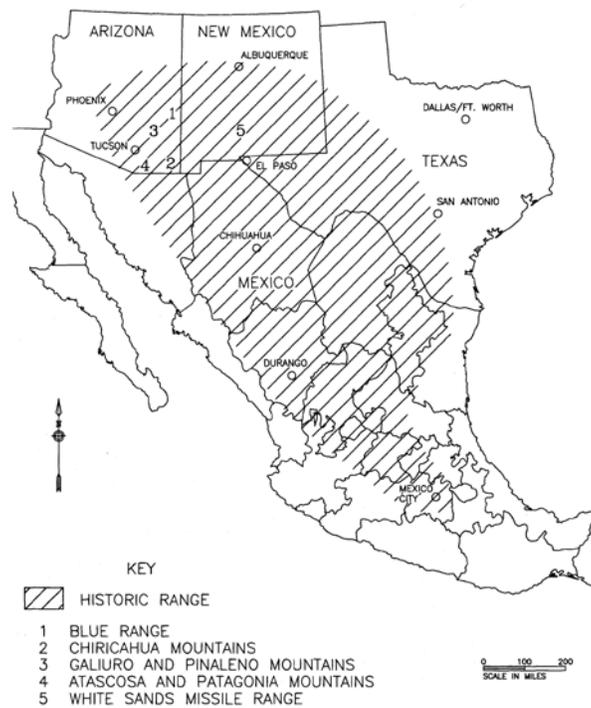


Fig. 4-1. *C.I. baileyi*'s historic range, as illustrated in the 1996 Environmental Impact Statement. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS 1996: 2.3).

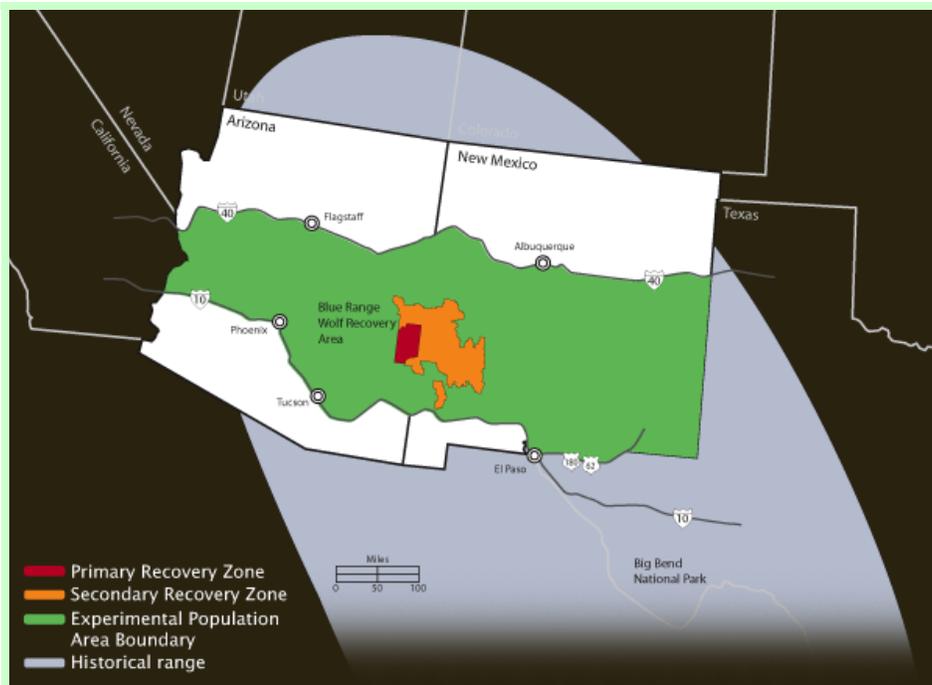


Fig. 4-2. Recovery zones and boundaries for *C.I. baileyi*. The light gray portions of this map reflect a further expansion – in comparison to previous studies – of *baileyi*'s historic range, based on probable genetic intergrading with northern subspecies. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://www.mexicanwolfeis.org/process/release-boundaries/>).

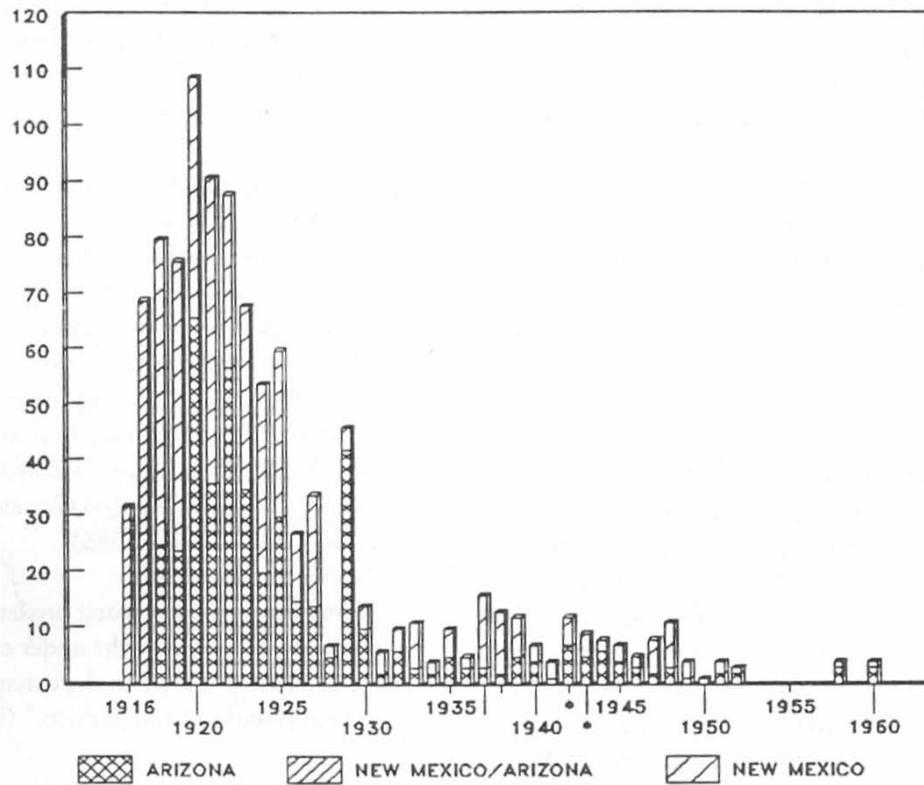


Fig. 4-3. The decline of *C.I. baileyi* in the United States. Wolf kills reported by federal and state cooperative hunters in Arizona and New Mexico, from 1916-1960. Note the precipitous drop after 1930. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS 1996: 1.6).

**Arizona Game and Fish Department's Twelve-Step Procedure for
Reestablishment of Nongame and Endangered Species (AGFD 1987)**

Activities for Project Originators	Function
1. Assess status of species/population and available resources.	Determine feasibility of re-establishment project.
2. Complete re-establishment scorecard, submit it to Nongame Branch.	Facilitate priority ranking and preliminary review from programmatic perspective.
Activities by Nongame Branch	Function
3. Prepare proposal abstract, distribute it and scorecard throughout AGFD.	Elicit broad review of project and of possible conflicts or effects on other programs, projects, etc.
4. Submit briefing memo to AGFC through AGFD Director. No general press release.	Provide AGFC with background on potential project.
5. Review AGFD comments and develop project checklist. Submit summary to AGFD Director.	Identify and address any specific concerns and actions necessary to mitigate them; determine whether to proceed with or to reject the projects
6. Solicit comment on project concept from public and appropriate agencies, organizations.	Communicate goals, provide early awareness of intent.
7. Discuss project and public input and AGFD recommendations with AGFC.	Determine appropriate action; terminate project or proceed. Inform public of decision.
8. Prepare re-establishment proposal. Distribute for review both inside and outside AGFD, and submit to AGFC.	Document specifics of proposal project. Elicit philosophical, technical review.
9. Summarize comment, revise proposal and complete AGFD Environmental Checklist. If necessary, draft Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement.	Ensure NEPA compliance and requisite coordination with existing programs, projects.
10. Submit final draft project proposal for outside review and to AGFC.	Provide for peer, agency and public comment.
11. Summarize comment, review proposal. Submit final project proposal to AGFD Director for action.	Ensure policy review, compliance with procedures and determine final approval or denial of proposal.
12. Notify AGFC and public of decision.	Provide information on decision and notice of project implementation schedule.

Fig. 4-4. The Arizona 12-Step. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS 1996: E-1).

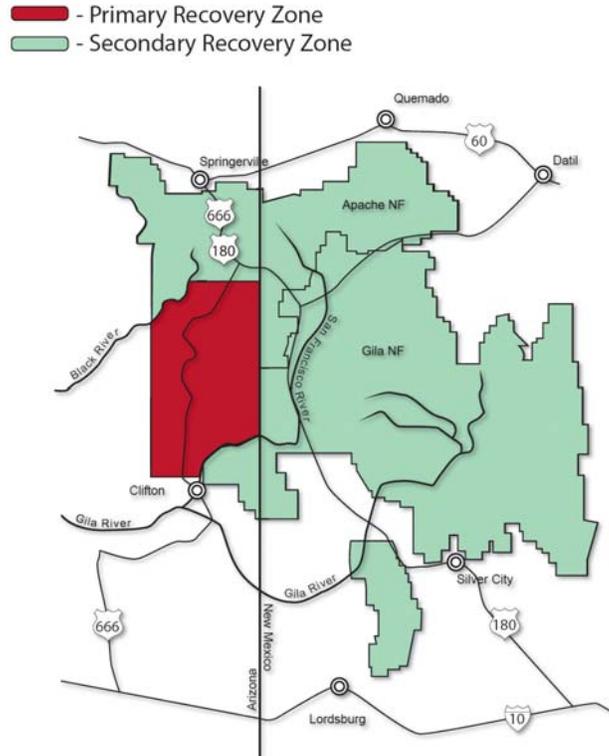


Fig. 4-5. Primary and secondary recovery zones for Mexican wolves. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://www.mexicanwolfeis.org/media/pdf/Blue-Range-Wolf-Recovery-Area.pdf>).

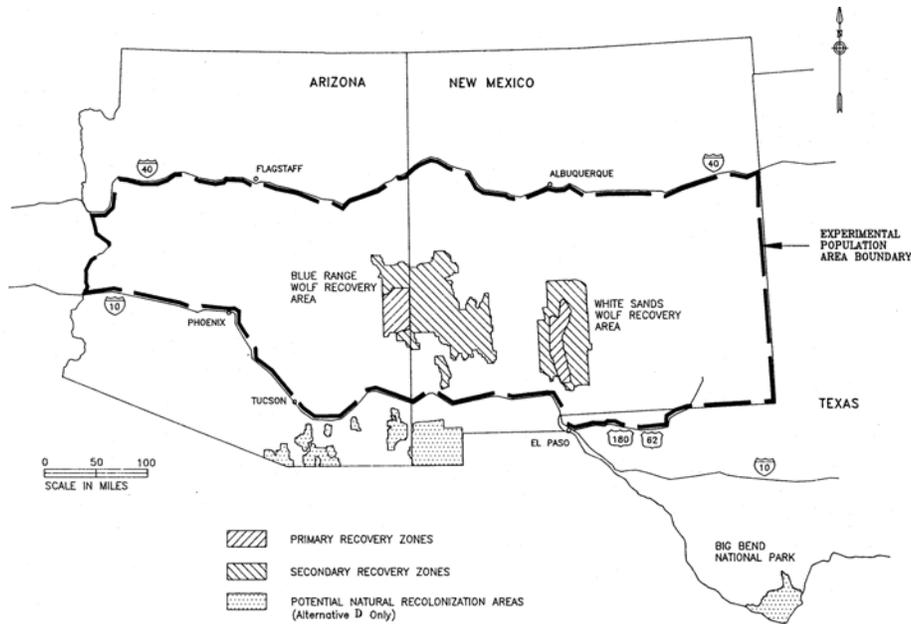


Fig. 4-6. Primary and secondary recovery zones, and the experimental population boundary, as illustrated in the 1996 Environmental Impact Statement. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS 1996: vi).

CHAPTER 5 HUMAN AND WOLF TOPOGRAPHY IN THE SOUTHWEST: THE VALUES

Wolf recovery faces tremendous difficulties, and it is not a matter of ecology (i.e., the environmental adjustments that necessarily take place with the reintroduction of a top predator) that makes Southwestern recovery most challenging. According to wolf biologist L. David Mech, “Biologically, wolves could inhabit parts of almost all regions of the U.S. and many of the European countries. ...If biology were the only relevant factor, however, wolves would never have had to be declared endangered” (1995: 274). Much of the social conflict that makes wolf recovery contentious inheres to incompatible narratives about the human place in the natural world, including the stories people inherit, the (new) stories people encounter, and the friction created by these encounters. Presently, wolves are caught between stories. Despite a growing number of people who value wolves as a member of the biotic community, the narrative of wolf as co-inhabitant has not triumphed.

Myths as “Sensible” Narratives

In arguments about wolves, the word “myth” is often tossed around as a casual (but intentional) dismissal of the “emotional” or “irrational” views that other people hold.¹ Within the discipline of religious studies, the word “myth” carries an entirely different set of connotations: myths are considered powerful stories, valued by the community that tells them, that usually explain the way in which the world came into being and works, and meaningfully orients and integrates people as a community within these larger stories.

¹ Examples are numerous, but for representative selections, see Schlickeisen (2001: 64-65, 67, 73); Fritts *et al.* (2003: 289-90); and Busch (1998): xiv; and, for opposing myth vs. facts webpages, see http://www.defenders.org/programs_and_policy/wildlife_conservation/imperiled_species/wolves/wolf_facts/myths_about_wolves.php, and http://www.saveelk.com/wolf_004.htm (both sites accessed 20 June 2008). The counterclaim to such “myths” is often held to be “sound science,” the assumption being that science is an objective, non-biased set of facts that can disabuse people of falsehoods. For an excellent treatment of science as a “privileged discourse” in discussions about wolves, and an argument for the importance of social scientific contributions and ethical inquiry into moral values and norms as they relate to perceptions of wolves, see Lynn (2006, 2008).

Thus, myths “make sense” in at least two ways: they explain why the world is as it is, and they *make*, or construct, sense; that is, they provide legitimacy for a particular view of the world that is enacted as people live their lives. Another way to think about this definition is that mythological narratives “present” (see Bolle 2005: 6359). They present a meaningful and authoritative narrative about how and why the world is the way it is, which is also *made present* by a particular community’s allegiance to the myth. Myths, in this sense, are not construed as “falsehoods” (even when they are understood as provisional or empirically unverifiable). “The principal question,” at least for scholars of religion (as well as anthropologists, historians, and others), “is not ‘What is true?’ but ‘What have societies, civilizations, and communities found necessary to point to and preserve as true?’” (Bolle 2005: 6360). Whether understood literally or not, myths work on the imagination and in the physical landscape as one learns them, hears them, reads them, and enacts them over time. Finally, though myths may feature humans (e.g., how humans came to exist in this world), they often include other animals as important actors in their plots.

Human ecologist Paul Shepard, whose lifework circled around the idea “that the human species emerged enacting, dreaming, and thinking animals and cannot be fully itself without them,” wrote in *The Others* that the “most revealing source of information about how people conceive of themselves in relation to the nonhuman world is myth. In studying the perception of animals, I am led again and again back to storytelling and songlines, to narrative and music, which are basic to the mythic tale and its enactment as ceremony” (1996b: 7). Though five hundred years of mass-produced writing in the West may have dampened the desire for good oral storytelling, human lives are still patterned on stories that make sense of the world. Good stories provide orientation within the world, advice on how to negotiate one’s surroundings, and

ideals for future aspirations.² These stories, the ones that explain, narrate, and idealize how humans fit into the larger world around them, are the myths we live by.

Perhaps it is most difficult to recognize our own myths. All peoples have stories about the natural world, tested by time, yet may cling to the explanatory power of a story even when it does not directly cohere with feedback from their environment.³ In this engagement of narrative and land, it seems there are two principal options: people may reshape their stories, re-narrating their lives to meet the constraints of their environments; or they may reshape the world around them, conforming it, inasmuch as it is within their power to do so, to the narratives they have inherited. Nearly always, people oscillate between these two options.

In a summary of her experiences with persons for whom Mexican wolf reintroduction is a major concern, historian Marsha Weisiger observed,

nearly everyone asked for the opportunity to offer his or her own historical narrative ... that connected their own personal histories – and often their family histories – to the environments they most cared about. ...Each drew a moral about the campaign to exterminate wolves. ...And faced with competing narratives about the causes of environmental change, all held steadfastly to their own memories of the past and the righteousness of their personal relationship to nature (2004: 143).

The lenses with which people view wolf reintroduction, as Weisiger rightly noted, are shaped by memories of the past and the “righteousness” of conforming one’s personal narrative to these memories.

² As Bolle noted, myths should not be associated exclusively with stories of origins, for “Even eschatological myths, seemingly positing the end of the world as if in contrast to the beginnings of the world, do not abandon their relationship to the cosmogony. This abiding relation is not paradoxical. All thoroughgoing eschatologies express themselves as renewals of the real truly intended origin” (2005: 6362).

³ Anthropologist Roy Rappaport (1979) has done very fine work on this topic, particularly in his examination of “maladaptations” between cultural meanings and empirical experiences. Such maladaptations impede the ability of a cultural system to respond to environmental stress, and are exacerbated by increased size and scale in structures (i.e., through oversegregation and overspecialization information gets distorted, which inhibits the ability of a system to respond) and usurpation (i.e., short-term instrumental goals of high specificity are elevated to the status of enduring fundamental principles). For another articulation of how religious/cultural systems may prevent response to environmental change, see Diamond (2005).

The power of these narratives is not confined to sacred texts or family tales. These narratives do not stay on the shelf or in the mind; they are actively pursued and enacted. Thus, our environmental topography is shaped by and is a critical part of our narrative topography.⁴ One way of understanding this shaping process is to say that these narratives make a home within which to dwell. “Religious homemaking,” according to Thomas Tweed,

not only maps the boundaries of the natal place, whether this is imagined as a foraging route or a transnational empire, but also charts taxonomies of the people within and beyond its borders. In other words, it maps social space. It draws boundaries around *us* and *them*; it constructs collective identity, and concomitantly, imagines degrees of social distance (2006: 111).

Tweed was referring to human communities when he wrote about degrees of social distance, but his statement can be expanded to encompass the broader boundaries between the human and the nonhuman. When people use negative terms like “varmint,” “pest,” “thief,” or “disease” in reference to wolves, they are simultaneously drawing boundaries and making claims about appropriate social distance.⁵ Such terms are taxonomic classifications of threats to the “homeland,” and homeland security has sometimes involved eliminating this threat.

The Values of Land

When people argue over appropriate forms of land use, geographer Paul Starrs asserted, “what is being fought for is the righteous high ground of a future and present dispute over environmental despoliation” (1998: 22). As I have noted, the arguments about wolves are nested within a larger, overarching argument about land. Starrs, who offered his detailed reflections on

⁴ For an insightful essay on the relationship between the “storied reality” of human experience and the values that inhere to narrating environmental history, see Cronon (1992).

⁵ Of course, calling a person a “wolf” or describing deviance in terms of “wolfishness” creates the same kind of distance from a different direction. Philosopher Mary Midgley observed, “To speak of people as wolves, rats, vipers, sharks, or vultures is not just to say that they are troublesome. It is to accuse them directly of vice. And among these vice-denoting animals the most vice-denoting of all in our tradition has been the wolf, as one can check by looking up the entries under *wolf* in any quotation dictionary” (2001: 181).

Western ranching and land-use policies in *Let the Cowboy Ride*, is correct in recognizing that there is a “righteous high ground” at stake in these conflicts. In the barbed charges levied against urban environmental “elitists” or rural ranching “rubes,” one should not lose sight of the *terra firma* that exists below the rhetoric: land is at stake – how it used, yes, but especially *why and for whom* it is used, that is, its purported purpose.

In thinking and arguing about the purpose of land, we circle back to who has the right to dictate the terms of land use. And, perhaps more pointedly, does physical connection to and length of tenure on the land in question endow certain people with more authority to speak for how that land is used (i.e., what qualifies someone to speak on behalf of the land, their land, or any lands)? In short, what kinds of relationships *should* humans have with place, and who gets to decide when many interests are involved, including the interests of nonhumans? This *should* is founded on the often unspoken assumptions that people have about the natural world and even the cosmos.

So, what role do wolves play in this? Terry Johnson’s observation is appropriate: “[I]t’s about people and values clashes, and the wolf fits into that scenario beautifully” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ). When arguing about wolves, people are also inevitably arguing about human relationships to the environment. Moreover, they are arguing about what being human means. Employing some religious terminology, one may say people are arguing about the priority of their inherited traditions and stories (myths), their way of life and notions of what makes such a life worth living (ethics), and their authority to enact this way of life as they work toward an ideal vision of the future (teleology). All of these concerns are rooted, and find expression in, relationships to the land.

Because it offers a view of the kinds of issues at stake in the controversy encircling wolf recovery in the Southwest, in the following sections I trace the outlines of the dominant narratives of the three most prominent actors in wolf reintroduction in the Southwest.⁶ Further, I note the understandings of the natural world these narratives inspire, the lines of demarcation that these stories encourage between human and nonhumans, and the types of ethics people enact as they work toward fulfilling their stories (see Table 5-1). For each group, I rely primarily on interviews conducted in the summer of 2007 to explicate issues that are relevant to Southwestern reintroduction, while complementing these local perspectives with literature and research that draws from broader theoretical and cultural sources.

To study wolves in a geographical context that includes diverse institutional and non-institutional religious affiliations, it is necessary to wade into broader cultural streams, and these streams are better forded by thinking in terms of values, myths, narratives, ethics, and spirituality, rather than “religion” as a subject that is synonymous with institutional forms of practice. Defining religion broadly as a “mytho-pragmatic negotiation with ‘others’ (human, suprahuman, and subhuman) that creates and reinforces identity markers with emotional resonance and ultimate significance,” as I noted in chapter one, is one way to approach the different ways in which people narrate their lives and how they define themselves in relation to others. This approach, in my view, offers a better access point into the turbid waters of the various values attributed to nonhuman animals by a wide variety of people.

That said, the term “religion” *was* used by several people I interviewed to describe the tenacity with which other people held to their beliefs or understandings about wolves, the land,

⁶ After dividing up the “actors” and their value “types” for this chapter, I found a very similar scheme (localists, environmentalists, and agency personnel) used in reference to carnivore conservation in western Wyoming, which also addresses many of the issues I take up here (Taylor and Clark 2005).

and/or their communities. I find this notable, for it indicated a perception of deeply held values that were difficult to interpret or categorize without recourse to the term “religion.” However, people also used “religion” as a pejorative word to signal their frustration with others’ seeming irrationality or inordinate emotional response to wolves. With both attributions of the term, those whom I interviewed were not referring to institutional religions per se but to the ultimacy of peoples’ values; that is, how other people strongly defined themselves by some set of core values that conflicted with their own.⁷ Where it is appropriate to do so, I note such instances throughout the chapter. Beyond these understandings of religion, however, I am also suggesting that people are doing religious work as they orient themselves in social and geographical space, and that the values expressed about wolves in the Southwest – whether they are framed economically, socially, or scientifically – are intertwined with how people envision and construct meaningful moral spaces.

Pastoral Ethics

*And them that don't know him won't like him
And them that do sometimes won't know how to take him
He ain't wrong he's just different
but his pride won't let him do things to make you think he's right⁸*

⁷ While it might be expected that environmentalists or government employees with science-related degrees would be less likely to profess a particular religious affiliation, it may be more surprising that the ranchers with whom I spoke – though admittedly a small sample – did not maintain any formal religious affiliations. Broadly speaking, this may have to do with the fiercely independent ethos of Western ranchers; something that may translate into distrust of or hostility toward the federal government but also indifference to or suspicion of religious authorities as well. “God and County” may be where ultimate allegiance lies. Surveys that target religious affiliation indicate intriguing corroborations of this impression. For example, according to a 2002 *USA Today* poll, “The six states with the highest percentage of people saying they have no religion are all Western states, with the exception of Vermont at 22%” (Grossman 2002). In a 2008 survey conducted by The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, which was based on over 35,000 interviews with Americans, the states of Arizona and New Mexico were well above the national average (16%) for people claiming to be religiously “unaffiliated” (22% and 21%, respectively). In both states, only Catholicism and Evangelical Protestantism had greater percentages of adherents associated with them, and then only by margins of 1-5 percentage points (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, online: <http://religions.pewforum.org/> [accessed May 2008]).

⁸ Ed Bruce and Patsy Bruce, “Mammas Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys,” United Artists (1974).

Before walking into an open-house meeting about wolves in Reserve, New Mexico, freelance writer Tom Dollar took a moment to scan the bumper stickers he saw pasted on a pickup truck. One read: “To protect and care for his creations, God made ranchers. No wolves!” (Dollar [2002] 2005: 230). Bumper stickers are designed to lack nuance and they often succinctly convey the core of people’s passions and fears. The one Dollar saw expressed well the feeling that God had given humans generally and ranchers in particular a responsibility to care for “creation.” Furthermore, according to this view, wolves were no longer needed and the not-so-subtle implication was that they never were. Although protecting and caring for God’s “creations” did not include all creations (i.e., wolves), this bumper sticker did illustrate one variety of a *stewardship* ethic, a stream of thought among some wolf opponents that posits humans as a species uniquely capable of caring for and protecting what God has put in their charge.

Bumper stickers aside, ranchers that rely on their ranches for the majority of their income often must practice sophisticated forms of animal and land management. In an already marginal business, it makes eminent practical sense to be attentive to the land, and little sense to cut your “resources” out from under your feet.⁹ As rancher Bob Budd observed,

Successful ranchers manage for a range of options, from drought to perfect moisture regimes, and then adapt, and adapt, and adapt. The culture of ranching is a dichotomy of certain knowledge and total acceptance of random chance. . . . In business circles and culture, the term “adaptive management” has become the buzz. In a century and a half of ranching, no one ever thought to coin the phrase because they were too damn busy adapting (2002: 38).

Dan Groebner, nongame specialist for the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), has spent a lot of time with ranchers and rural people for whom wolf reintroduction is a concern.

⁹ Due to the so-called cattle “bonanza” of the 1870s and 1880s, many inaccuracies persist about the wealthy culture of livestock production. Though many ranchers in the arid and semi-arid West utilize large tracts of public land for forage, the bonanza days are long over (see Starrs 1998: 7, 12, 26-27, 71-73).

He noted that environmental regard is important to the people with whom he interacts, and contrasted this regard with urban abuses:

These are not people wanting to have a new Hummer every two years, but people who just want to put food on the table. ... They don't have anything against animals if it didn't effect them. ... They would say they have a land ethic, that they know more about what's going on with the land than we [government personnel] do. ... They consider themselves environmentalists in some ways – that they're more in tune with what's going on out there (interview, 13 July 2007, Pinetop, AZ).¹⁰

Terry Johnson, director of the nongame program for the AGFD, noted that “A lot of the anti-wolfism that we have to contend with comes from people we probably cherish more than anyone else” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ). Even though Johnson did not think that the most appropriate use of public lands in the Southwest was a year-round ranching regime in areas where rainfall is less than ten inches a year, he commented, “I'll take ranchers over city-slickers any day of my life, just in terms of their being straightforward,” and also because he regarded them as “independent spirits and absolutely willing to work as hard as the day is long to accomplish something” (ibid.).

The work ethic that Johnson admired among many of the ranchers with whom he has interacted has been more elaborately documented and described by Starrs as a “culture” that has a “self-conscious set of values” (1998: xv). It is, in short, a way of life – some would even say a religion.¹¹ Though ranchers often display a strong anthropocentrism, with domestic animals

¹⁰ Indeed, Groebner's observations were put to me with a little more pepper by some ranchers, who repeatedly expressed suspicions that government biologists thought that their science (“book knowledge”) better equipped them to know what wolves do and how many of them there were than the locals who lived in impacted areas. For example, Joe Cannon, rancher and part-time deputy livestock inspector for Greenlee County for the last three decades, remarked that government employees are “educated idiots” (interview, 7 June 2007, near York, AZ).

¹¹ The dogged determination of ranchers to adapt and endure, as well as their strong attachment to their lifeways and land, has been described as “ranch fundamentalism” (see Starrs 1998: 9, 76-79; Starrs draws the term from Smith and Martin 1972). This phrase is one indication of the religiously held, if not religious, beliefs and practices that circulate around ranching. Starrs argued that the “view of ranching as something transcendent, beyond the demands of ‘more money,’ is more than simple romance regarding the land. Land for ranchers is a direct, experienceable reality, embodied in a series of stewardship values that extend at times to land management...” (1998: 78).

being of instrumental value and non-domestic animals being a nuisance or just an animal “making a living” on the land, sometimes ranching is unfairly categorized as *solely* an economic enterprise.¹²

Land is key to ranching, but ranching traditions are bound up with local lifeways and relationships, and therefore it is more than land that is at stake when people express fears about their losses or the fragmentation of their communities:

The land for many is no commodity but a collection of historical happenings, stories, contests with cows or horses, and contemplative moments. Land is cultural ... and some groups within society are more in need of that cultural sustenance than others. We all need stories, narratives, to give meaning to life. But ranchers can also make a case that they need cash to keep the stories alive (Starrs 1998: 77).

There are many among the environmentally inclined who claim that ranching is an upstart outfit and an imposition on a fragile landscape, yet, historically regarded, ranching is a practice with roots stretching back in time and around the world. This does not provide an impermeable argument for its continuance, but it does speak to how the roots of traditions tied to specific lands have an enduring power that is difficult to dislodge.

The ranchers with whom I spoke typically claimed to be areligious. Nevertheless, when asked about how they viewed the land, they most frequently invoked the concept of stewardship. Daisy Mae Cannon, who was the 2006 Arizona Cattlewoman of the Year, told me, “The ranchers that I talk about are us that’s the stewards of the land. We’ve been here, we take care of the land because it’s gotta take care of us, and it’s gotta take care of our child. If we don’t take care of it, it’s not going to take care of us” (interview, 7 June 2007, near York, AZ). I asked Cannon if this had to do with any particular religious conviction, to which her husband interjected, “We don’t

¹² See Grigsby (1980) for an anthropological perspective on how “Formal economic theory often will not explain many of the decisions made by ranchers” (93). Like Starrs, Grigsby examines ranching as a “way of life” and as a “subculture” that accepts marginal or negative financial returns in order to enjoy other qualitative values.

have a religious faith. It's pretty simple: you either do a good job of stewardship or you won't be here very long" (ibid.). This "pretty simple" formula corresponds to Starrs' observation that, "At its core, ranching is an economic pursuit, a form of agriculture, and a way of life" (Starrs 1998: 9). One cannot easily partition these categories; if one suffers, so do the others.

But what mythic narrative typically lends support to this way of life? In chapters two and three, I focused on how "securing" the land, for both ranchers and the government, was most often justified by a dominionistic vision in which humans were understood as nature's manager and/or conqueror. I also suggested that wolves in particular were at risk because of the strong pastoral metaphors that are embedded in Christian narratives and images. Perhaps ranching is just a concentrated form of a widespread American nature narrative, in which notions of a natural hierarchy, with human dominion prominently featured, comprise the background assumptions of rural and city folk alike.¹³ According to two ranchers with whom I spoke, at one meeting they attended about wolf reintroduction in Arizona one of the ranchers present wanted to make sure that there were no questions about where attendees' priorities lay, stating, "For me to continue for us to have this roundtable, we have to admit that man is dominant" (interview, the Holders, 6 June 2007, Tucson, AZ).

¹³ Former forest service officer Don Hoffman attempted to articulate this cultural assumption among the most vocal wolf opponents. His comments are notable in light of his distinction between religion and inherited cultural values: "It really gets back to the value. It's not like they are bad people. It's not like [anything] they are lacking. They just have this different value, and it comes right back to how they connect to the land. I'm not sure religion even factors into this, because a lot of the people I see that are the most opinionated – whether they be ranchers or loggers – never go to church. I don't know what they're background is, I don't know how they were brought up to give them the background that they have, but it is a spiritual value aside from organized religion in how you see yourself in connection to the earth and other life. And if you see yourself as the dominant one and in a position to exercise that dominance, whether God gave it to us, for the dominion of earth and the benefit of man, or you just feel like, 'We're in charge, we're the toughest and the strongest, we're the ones that are making the decisions so we ought to make the decisions that benefit us.' So, some of it could be religious, some of it could be capitalistic ... it could be survival of the fittest ... a decision comes up, and [people think] what is best for me? ... It's like the ultimate form of provincialism ... whatever province you put yourself in, you tend to want to favor your province, and I think the ultimate one is human, like man versus everything else" (interview, 11 July 2007, near Alpine, AZ)

There is, however, a strong countervailing wind in ranching, frequently expressed with the umbrella term “stewardship.”¹⁴ Dominion may be considered absolute, but ranchers most often consider themselves benevolent managers – users but not abusers of the land. To believe that humans do not have their hands in almost everything, according to New Mexico rancher Karen Riggs, is to suffer from an illusion:

We maybe fool ourselves by saying we cannot manage. We always manage by being a part of the picture. We have the ability to make decisions, and we do make decisions that are gonna effect all animals around us, all the environment around us. So, we’re always managing whether we admit it or not, just because by our nature that’s what we [humans] do – we fiddle with things. We’re not just a member of the food chain; we’re a huge influence on our environment and everything we do (interview, 6 June 2007, Sunsites, AZ).

I asked Riggs if she believed that this “fiddling” gave humans additional ethical or religious responsibilities. She replied,

I don’t really like the word “religion.” I think it’s a human responsibility, it’s maybe a spiritual responsibility – yeah, I think it is. ... You get people saying they know and they can tell you what you’re supposed to do from every angle, but I think that’s really what spirituality boils down to: What am I here to do? How am I supposed to relate to everything in this world, and treat everything and everybody? Where’s my path to grow? So, yeah, I think it’s a responsibility (ibid.).

Take care of the land and it takes care of you, as Cannon said. Stewardship, like sustainability and other green-tinged terms, is a word that signifies many things to many people. While it has its foundations in Abrahamic concepts of land care,¹⁵ it is also increasingly used by mainstream environmental groups to describe an ethics of care for the natural world – possibly also for its

¹⁴ It is difficult to overemphasize how frequently the word “stewardship” appears in literature about ranching. For excellent examples, see the special issue on “Cowboy Conservation” in *Orion Afield* 4/3 (Summer 2000), and the various chapters of Knight et al. (2002).

¹⁵ The notion of humans as God’s stewards is often derived from Genesis 2.15, where humans are told to “till and keep” (alt., *serve*) the garden. This theological trope has become increasingly popular in Christian contexts in which environmental care is a concern (see Bakken 2005; DeWitt 2005), though the flexibility of the term has furthered variant agendas (Larsen 2005).

politically mobilizing cross-over potential for religiously minded Americans.¹⁶ Because of the wide variety of meanings attached to the word stewardship, it is helpful, in my view, to be more specific about the relationship between ranching and stewardship, particularly with regard to nonhuman animals. Diverse forms of ranching practice are better placed under what can be called a *pastoralist ethic*.

The term *pastoralist ethic* was used by ethologist David Fraser to identify forms of land practice that he viewed as drawing deeply from biblical models. “The pastoralist ethic of the Bible,” according to Fraser,

was not an ethic based specifically on kindness and avoidance of cruelty ... nor did it espouse a fundamental kinship between humans and other species ... and it certainly did not espouse equality between humans and other species. Rather, the biblical approach defined a relationship between humans and animals involving a mixture of legitimate use combined with, and occasioning, diligent care (2006: 548).¹⁷

A pastoralist ethic, in other words, affirms a hierarchical disparity between humans and nonhumans, yet also recognizes forms of subjectivity and moral worth in many other animals, especially those close to home. While some may see this type of ethic as ultimately self-serving, a pastoralist ethic better identifies the various relationships ranchers share with nonhuman

¹⁶ Bob Budd, for example, who was previously mentioned, is not only the *director of stewardship* for The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming, but has received stewardship awards from the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Wyoming Riparian Association, and ReNew America (Knight *et al.* 2002: 243-44). See also, Dizard (2001), who connects an “emerging ethos of stewardship” (81) among Americans to a narrative of loss and recovery that he finds problematic for its resistance to wildlife management. One example of a group that may fall under Dizard’s critique is Sinapu (a Colorado-based carnivore conservation group). Prior to joining forces with Forest Guardians to become WildEarth Guardians in 2008, Sinapu operated under the slogan “Stewardship for the Seventh Generation,” combining a familiar Christian environmental trope (“stewardship”) with an increasingly popular Native American concept of considering future generations in one’s decisions (“the seventh generation”). At the Frontiers of Wolf Recovery” conference I attended in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 2005, Rob Edward (currently the director of carnivore recovery for WildEarth Guardians) advocated for intentionally replacing the term “management” with “stewardship” as a way to reach the larger public.

¹⁷ Fraser argued particularly *for* this type of ethic as an alternative to the kinds of industrial-scale animal production that emerged (and continued to grow) after World War II (2006: 549). He also saw it as offering a means to get beyond philosophical cul-de-sacs over animal equality and move toward what he considered more practical questions about animal-care standards.

animals: a complex of various scales of concern that does not uniformly dismiss the moral claims of other animals on the humans who care for them.

Philosopher Mary Midgley provided another relevant reference point for considering the complexities of a pastoral ethic when she wrote about the “mixed community” that humans share with domesticated animals (1983: 112-124). Rather than focus on all or nothing conflicts between an ecosystem-based ethic and the value of individual animals, Midgley advocated a contextual approach that acknowledges the claims of other animals with which we work, play, and to which we are bound by our choosing. In other words, deliberately bringing animals into human social communities through domestication, *should* involve greater consideration for their well being. Without broaching the subject of whether domestication itself should be considered a manipulative and unjust exercise of human power over other animals, a pastoral-based ethic takes for granted that certain bonds are more important than others – between humans and other humans, and between humans and domesticated nonhumans.¹⁸

One revealing comment that was made to me by a rancher – which expressed this pastoral perspective – was that wolves are like all wild animals: they did not have names, they had numbers. By way of contrast, on smaller ranches, individual domestic animals (even when raised for beef production) are often affectionately named for certain characteristics or behavioral tendencies (see, for example, Lambert 2002). While some ranchers may value the

¹⁸ Contrary to some simplified accounts of ranching, people who live and work on the land rarely divide animals into a simple formula of domestic : good :: wild : bad. Rather, as philosopher J. Baird Callicott noted in his elaboration of Midgley’s work, humans are subject to “nested” and “overlapping community entanglements” that require different scales of value. Even Callicott, who clearly favored ecosystem integrity as the ultimate trump card, acknowledged that “We are still subject to all the other more particular and individually oriented duties to the members of our various more circumscribed and intimate communities. And since they are closer to home, they come first. ...[O]ne should not allow a wild predator to help herself to one’s free-range chickens, members of one’s immediate mixed community. But neither should one interfere, other things being equal, in the interaction of the wild members of the biotic community” (1989b: 58). These “relative weights,” as Callicott described the variables of the adjudication process, are deeply implicated in a pastoralist ethic. Though predators are a concern, they are not – stereotypes notwithstanding – universally feared, hated, or shot on sight, as my conversations with ranchers underscored.

interests of *their* animals because it benefits them personally, or may refer to their cattle as a “crop,” the idea of a “mixed community” composed of domestic and human members offers a more nuanced reading of these socially based relationships than do more general notions of stewardship. Ranchers have various scales of concern, which are informed by affection for and the economic utility of both domestic and wild animals.

Bonds are formed between owners and their animals, and this gives wolf reintroduction a heightened significance for those who run livestock near or in wolf pack territories. Darcy Ely and her husband have a ranch in eastern Arizona that has been subject to depredations by Mexican wolves, and she related that her husband has “witnessed the calves screaming and everything . . . and emotionally it just wrecks him.” She added, “Emotionally, we’re bonded to our animals. And for some reasons, it’s always your favorite ones that disappear” (interview, 7 June 2007, Willcox, AZ). Many ranchers maintain that livestock losses only tell part of the story. Although projections – and compensation – show that only a fraction of livestock losses are due to wolf depredation, what seems miniscule to some (a justifiable loss for the greater good), strikes closer to home for the individuals who suffer the loss.¹⁹ Statistical abstraction runs aground against personal attachments.

Wolves and Ranchers

John James Audubon wrote in 1835 that “There seems to be a universal feeling of hostility among men against the Wolf, whose strength, agility, and cunning, which latter is scarcely inferior to that of his relative master Reynard, tend to render him an object of hatred, especially to the husbandman, on whose flocks he is ever apt to commit depredations” ([1835] 1995: 47).

¹⁹ As the socioeconomic component of the five-year review of the Mexican wolf program stated, “approximately 1,310 cattle and calves and six sheep died from causes other than slaughter in the BRWRA in 2002 (the year of highest recorded depredations), *compared to 5 to 33 cattle killed by wolves*. Thus, wolf predation comprises a small percent (between 0.3 and 2.5 percent) of typical cattle losses experienced annually in the BRWRA. However, some individual ranchers may be disproportionately affected” (MW 2005: SEC, ES-3; see also SEC 3.30-32, my emphasis).

There is no longer “universal hostility” toward wolves, but Audubon’s comments about the “husbandman” still hold some weight. Wolves, not only for their depredations, Audubon indicates, but for their attributes, are hated more than other predators. Ranchers in the Southwest, though not uniformly against reintroduction, are the people who stand to be most directly affected and are also therefore generally the most resistant.

Ely told me that her initial reaction to wolf reintroduction in the Southwest was a sort of nonreaction. “Another government project, you know. We’ve dealt with other endangered species: the Mexican spotted owl, the Chiricahua leopard frog, the Gila chub, the loach minnow – it’s just another one. Your first reaction: it’s probably not gonna work” (interview, 7 June 2007, Willcox, AZ). The implication in Ely’s comment was that wolves were one more imposition of the government; another reason to shrug one’s shoulders, shake one’s head, and try to manage the best one can.

But are wolves *just another* endangered species? Wolves, unlike Chiricahua leopard frogs, are top-level predators. In addition to dealing with losses from predators like mountain lions and coyotes, ranchers are thus faced with an additional strain on their operations. Ely went on to say that wolves are “just another predator, [but] the wolf is one you can’t do anything about” (ibid.). In other words, if wolves are just an animal, why treat them with kid gloves? Why should they receive greater attention and greater protection than other wild animals? The necessity of treating wolves as more precious, more *endangered*, than any other animal was a common frustration among the ranchers with whom I spoke. When I asked Ely to tell me the first word that popped into her mind when she heard “wolves,” she said, “Pain in the ass” (ibid.). To the same question, another rancher I spoke with replied “controversy.” Others put it more starkly. If you cannot kill a wolf because of governmental protections, one rancher asked me, “You’re

letting the animals take control of our lives, right?” (Daisy Mae Cannon, 7 June 2007, York, AZ).

Certainly not all predators are equal in the eyes of the rancher. Though in general livestock owners in the Southwest treat mountain lion, coyote, and occasional black bear depredations as a part of other acceptable losses,²⁰ wolves are a different animal. Ely expressed a commonly held view when she told me, “Bears and lions have always been part of the [ranching] life since I was a child, so I just accept it” (interview, 7 June 2007, Willcox, AZ). In addition to the psychological burden of wolves once being absent, bears and mountain lions tend to be solitary hunters (except when females are rearing their cubs), while wolves are pack animals.

Perhaps surprisingly to urbanites who might lump these charismatic creatures in a larger category of the lovable “wild,” ranchers are keen to behavioral differences. Some descriptions of these behaviors are no doubt exaggerated, as they were historically. For example, one early twentieth century narrative from G.W. “Dub” Evans, operator of the Slash Ranch in the Gila National Forest area of New Mexico, argued for the categorical difference between wolves and other predators as follows:

It is true that other predators kill game animals, and a few individual lions and bear do become stock killers; but these animals rarely kill beyond the need of their own hunger. Sometimes they do, but not often. On the other hand, the lobo is a butcher, killing at every opportunity whether he is hungry or not. ...The wolf kills aimlessly, needlessly, and heartlessly without contributing anything at all. ...The very fact that man has, throughout the world and from earliest times hated and waged relentless war against him, seems to me to be far more telling evidence ... [that] [s]uch general hatred must be, and is, deserved. Granted that the wolf is brave, and granted that courage is an admirable quality, even

²⁰ According to the five-year review of the program, “Death losses include deaths caused by predators (such as coyotes, dogs, mountain lions, and bobcats); digestive, respiratory, and calving problems; weather conditions; poison; theft; and unknown causes. The average death loss rate for cattle and calves in Arizona and New Mexico was four percent in 1997 [the year prior to the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project]; the average death loss rate for sheep in the two states was five percent in 1997” (MW 2005: SEC 3.3).

courage becomes less than admirable when it is used, as in the case of the lobo, only for self preservation and wanton murder (Evans [1951] 2005: 80-81).

Courage, in this case, enabled only so much sympathy. The other side of such anthropomorphism was that wolves were wasteful and heartless, and a selective historical perspective justified their destruction. Perhaps at the bottom of such accusations, however, was a more basic sentiment: a dying, maimed, or destroyed domestic animal, when one is on the other side of the eating, feels like “murder.”

The Slash Ranch is just up the road from Jack Diamond, proprietor of the Beaverhead Ranch, which is located adjacent to the Gila Wilderness in southern Catron County. Diamond was familiar with the Slash Ranch narrative, and, though he did not share the vitriol of Evans, he did share the view that wolves were different because of their social bonds. He told me:

If mountain lions and bears were the same as wolves, they would have been killed out when the wolves were killed out. I think if you look at history, you’ll see there’s a difference... The problem with wolves are – I’m not a wolf biologist but I’m starting to become one – they’re a pack animal. They eat meat. They don’t eat bugs, and gray squirrels, and rabbits. They eat bigger animals. That’s their nature, and they hunt in packs. They’re gonna cause more conflict than a bear or lion, which I have no problem with a bear or lion – we’ve lived with them forever. Co-existed! Fine, I’m a big fan of bears and mountain lions. But wolves, from what I’ve seen, and what I’ve read, and what I’ve heard from other people – they’re a pack animal, and they eat meat, and they have to eat meat, and they’re not going to move like a bear or a mountain lion would. They’re going to stay in an area until there’s nothing to eat, and then they might move. But they don’t make a big circle, they stay in that location. They will move, but it’s going to take something for them to move (interview, 15 July 2007, Beaverhead Ranch, Catron County, NM).

Diamond, who is also an elk hunting outfitter, said he did not blame wolves, who were “just doing what they are supposed to do,” but in his estimation, when wolves took cattle or elk they were doing the equivalent of “poaching,” taking what was not theirs to take.

For those ranchers whose families have been ranching for several generations in the Southwest, personal history also plays a role in perception. Joe Cannon, whose grandfather was a government trapper and killed one of the last wolves in New Mexico, demanded, “Why do you

think they got rid of it in the first place? They got rid of the damn things in the first place because they're worthless! They're into something all the time" (interview, 7 June 2007, near York, AZ). Based on his experience as a cattle inspector in Greenlee County, Arizona, he was convinced that "You can't raise cattle with those damn things" (ibid.).

Others – though a minority – have viewed the situation differently. Indeed, some ranchers have attempted to pioneer ways of living alongside predators, including wolves.²¹ Though not currently ranching, Jan and Will Holder became quasi-famous for trying to market "predator-friendly beef" when wolf reintroduction controversies in the Southwest were boiling.²² When the Holders moved back to Will's family ranch in 1992 to take over operations, they saw talk about wolf reintroduction as a sign of changing times. Jan told me that old-time ranchers had "that whole ethic, where for a long time, they just thought they [wolves] were cockroaches. They just thought that it was something civilization would be a whole lot better off without this animal. It was that brutality that we saw changing" (interview, 6 June 2007, Tucson, AZ). Will's family had some historical connections to wolf eradication, for according to family remembrances, Will's grandfather, Eugene Cleveland, killed the last wild wolf in Arizona. This

²¹ There are existing models of "predator friendly" ranching in the Northern Rockies, such as those promoted by Keystone Conservation (formerly the Predator Conservation Alliance). In the Southwest, groups like the Quivira Coalition and the Malpai Borderlands Group have creatively and collectively worked to institute innovative programs, some of which have involved endangered species. Wolves have not yet impacted these southwestern groups but their guiding philosophies would seem to indicate that creative solutions will be forged should wolf populations expand. Other incentive-based models exist in Europe (see Worster 1992; Boitani 2003; Zabel and Holm-Müller 2008). In addition, Holistic Range Management (HRM), a form of ranching pioneered by Zimbabwe expatriate Allan Savory, has made some inroads in the Southwest, and the organization that promotes its methods is headquartered in Albuquerque. Three of the ranchers (including the Holders) I spoke with, at one time, had been involved with an HRM group. In short, HRM emphasizes a form of adaptive planning and practice that integrates ongoing adjustments through constant monitoring of the land and one's animals (see Savory 2002).

²² See, for example, Wilkinson (2000); Holaday (2003: 14-16, 82-83, 105-106, 187-89); Holder (2004). In 2003, the Holders partnered with Defenders of Wildlife to market "Wolf Country Beef" and were named as a Defenders' "Wolf Guardian." For more on Defenders "Proactive Carnivore Conservation Fund," see: http://www.defenders.org/resources/publications/programs_and_policy/wildlife_conservation/solutions/protecting_people_property_and_predators.pdf (accessed 5 May 2008).

led Will, on occasion, to describe his “predator-friendly” mission as an act of “repaying his karmic debt” (Holder, in Holaday 2003: 16).

Still, though Will grew up on the ranch, his absence – along with his and Jan’s support for wolf reintroduction – drew predictable fire from other ranchers, who felt they were not only undermining a unified front of opposition, but that they were profiting (through their predator-friendly beef marketing program) at other ranchers’ expense, whose ranches were closer to reintroduction sites. Thus, though ranchers, this generation of Holders were sometimes construed as “outsiders,” and they found that others were, in their words, “actively trying to sabotage us” through character assassination (interview, 6 June 2007, Tucson, AZ). Jan said that, when she was pregnant, one rancher went so far as to poke her in the stomach and tell her, “A wolf is going to eat that child” (ibid.). Others created a packet of information about her with the charge that she was an “atheist,” among other items. Jan observed that the only thing the packet-creators actually got wrong was that she was an atheist; “the rest of the stuff I do believe: that wolves have a right to be here, that the wildlife has as much right to the land as we do, and that happens to be true. But I think I’m entitled to my opinions” (ibid.).

Despite their oddball status as ranchers who are supportive of wolf reintroduction and its potential benefits, the Holders are not alone among ranchers in the feeling that ranching develops a deeper spiritual connection to the land. Jan noted that their time on the ranch was a process “of learning the meaning of the whole thing and how we are supposed to fit in, and the more we got into it ... everything seemed to be linked to something else” (interview, 6 June 2007, Tucson, AZ). For her, this meant that “no matter what anybody said to us ... deep down experiences like that made us know we were doing the right thing” (ibid.).

Like the Holders, some ranchers in the Southwest have been willing to adapt, at least in part, to the inconvenience of wolves. Many more have been less welcoming. Some of the more zero-sum equations are put baldly: “Why does the wolf have more of a right than us to have the land?” (Daisy Mae Cannon interview, 7 June 2007, near York, AZ). Nor are ecological arguments, it is worth noting, convincing to many ranchers, who view “textbook” management with a wary eye.²³

Jack Diamond’s view can be taken as representative here. When I spoke to Diamond, he was working closely with the Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team to monitor a pack of wolves that had recently depredated on one of his cows. Though he generally appreciated the biologists trying to work with him, ultimately, he regarded their science as questionable. Diamond did not see a viable place for wolves in the Southwest, nor did the landscape seem adversely affected by their multiple decade absence. While elk might be slightly wilder, he noted, on the whole the ecological benefit of wolves was “insignificant.” Perhaps of greater significance was the conflict that wolves created with his philosophy of land management. His comments, in this case, bring the discussion back to the pastoral ethic and the dominion narrative described above. When I asked Diamond what he thought about the idea of wolves encouraging overall habitat health, he responded:

My idea is that: let people manage the land. Don’t let nature be the thing that drives the management. . . . People are more important than wolves, in my opinion. Can we get to the same point as what you’ve just said? Absolutely. Through good management practices. I can’t buy that one [that wolves are ecologically critical]. I hear it all the time. Again,

²³ According to wildlife biologist Harley Shaw, one local in the heart of the wolf recovery area divulged that he is “for” wolves since it would make “the country more interesting” but felt like the “boy and girl” wolf biologists were not “up to the job” (in Brown [1983] 2002: foreword, n.p.). Or as one rancher claimed, “They [government biologists] haven’t burned up the horsehair and the saddle blankets I have. You have to be on the land and be part of the land to make these environmental decisions. You can’t do it from a textbook or through a window” (Warren, in Banks 2003).

we're [local people] here. ...I think we're smart enough to be able to manage BETTER than nature, and I think you've seen that with the numbers of wildlife. There's more game now than there ever was 200 years ago, EVER. There's more wildlife here now than ever. If we're such terrible managers, why is that? Reason is we've actually made it BETTER (interview, 15 July 2007, Beaverhead Ranch, NM, *capitalized words indicate points at which Diamond raised his voice for emphasis*).

For ranchers, part of the incentive for managing nature "better" is passing on the ranch to those they care about.

Future Visions: Keeping Land Open and in the Family

Important to ranchers' long term vision is passing their land onto the next generation of family members, something made increasingly difficult by rising land prices and the instability of livestock markets.

Karen Riggs, who comes from a family of ranchers that immigrated to Arizona in the late 1800s, described some of the difficulties in holding onto these precious ties to the land. "Yeah, there's a saying," Riggs recalled, "in the West you either inherit a ranch, marry a ranch, or you are a doctor or a lawyer. ...A regular person cannot buy a ranch. No way" (interview, 6 June 2007, Sunsites, AZ). Riggs was speaking particularly to the increasing elevation of land prices, due to population growth in the West and second-home buyers, that made it difficult for local families to hold on to their land. Riggs estimated that wealthy "hobby ranchers" (those who buy a ranch for the aesthetic and personal pleasure) account for perhaps 20% of ranchers in her county. In the end, she said, she would rather have such people keeping the land in tact than see subdivisions fragment the landscape; this was "the worst thing that can happen. Better having someone playing on it but keeping it open ... [otherwise] wildlife doesn't do any good, people don't do any good" (ibid.).

Though some may dispute whether ranchers make the best use of their lands – and especially public lands – a broad swath of people on all sides of the debate about wolves agree

that keeping the rural characteristics of the land should be a priority. From the rancher's point of view, those who have cared for the land for generations are most qualified to keep and improve it, including the wildlife who use it alongside them.

Colorado rancher Tom Compton, former president of the Colorado Cattlemen's Association, shared some world-weary thoughts on this topic at a conference I attended in October 2005. Compton closed his talk with a "confession" that he was "one, old tired cowboy." Dealing with the regulations for endangered species of all varieties had only made him more tired. As he put it, "It's a little like that carnival game where you get a hammer and you're supposed to whack a mole every time it pops up. You can't win" (recording in author's possession, 2 October 2005, Colorado Springs, CO). He then noted the benefits that his services as a rancher provided to the public: "On our ranch, we provide clean air, clean water, open space, viewsheds, habitat for some forty-six bird species, including wild turkey and bald eagles ... and numerous others of God's creatures great and small. Remember, I like animals. ... When skunks show up around the house, I live trap and relocate them" (*ibid.*). Compton concluded by appealing to the audience, which consisted of a high proportion of wolf recovery supporters:

I'm a tired old cowboy, and I will quit and you will win, but please recognize what you lose when you win. The real question is not what subspecies to put where, or how many breeding pair or number of packs are needed, or even how many cows are gonna be eaten. We can let the scientists argue about that – they love that. The real question is do you really want to lose the habitat that I provide for those here now, and how do we reach an equitable balance between you and me? (*ibid.*).

A lot of concerns were packed into Compton's appeal. Like many ranchers, he viewed his work as a service: by protecting "God's creatures great and small" from developers, he was fighting additional encroachments and habitat fragmentation that most environmentalists would applaud (see Knight *et al.* 1995). Yet, like most ranchers, he had to squint as best he could into the future and wonder if his way of life was economically feasible on the not-too-distant horizon.

It is difficult to ascertain whether and to what degree some form of a pastoral ethic will persist in the Southwest, along with the ranching communities who practice such an ethic. Presently, it is enough to say that a pastoralist ethic indicates a difference in priorities between ranchers, environmentalists, and government biologists. Ranchers have locally based, social *and* ecological concerns, and the relative values of these are weighted by a pastoral perspective. As Midgley noted,

Both sorts [social and ecological claims] seem quite real, and, since habitat is so important to animals, they converge much more often than they conflict. There are, of course, cases where they do conflict, and we must consider them seriously. This clash is, however, no more surprising than other clashes between different sorts of moral claims, and we have to deal with it in the same way, namely, by working out the best system of priorities that we can manage (1983: 91).

In working these priorities out on the ground, ranchers seek to realize a localized goal of community and family stability, in which they and their neighbors maximize the return of the land's "resources" insofar as it does not undermine the stability of their local communities as a whole.

If anything, ranchers must be adaptable to survive the constant shifts in political winds, which sometimes blow at tornadic speeds across the landscape. Because ranching is not uniform, any more than ranchers themselves are, environmentally speaking some forms of ranching are better than others. For ranchers, nature is not a wasteland but a challenging domain that provides "resources" to the person adept enough to know how to gain such resources. Wild animals are entitled to these resources, but ranchers (and rural Southwesterners generally) see themselves as entitled to their share as well. And, in the end, if it comes down to a decision of who is more entitled, then human needs come first. In this sense, nature is penultimate. Humans make demands of it; not the other way around.

Ranching, as Starrs emphasized, is about more than property: it is about *land*, which goes beyond mere ownership and crosses into realms of physical intimacy, emotional connection, and narrative identification. Property may be traded away, bought and sold, but land strikes deeper chords. Ranching, in other words, is not merely an economic enterprise but a “social and cultural practice” (1998: 25) as well as an “integration of space and place,” for, as Starrs argued, the wide open spaces of the West are kept open by “an attachment and commitment to locale” (1998: 35). With livelihoods and communities at stake, wolf reintroduction in the Southwest has caused many to consider what the optimal uses of such wide open spaces are, and what kinds of human uses are compatible or not with the needs of another predator that has never been – despite the assertions of some Southwestern residents – “just another animal” in this region.

Environmental(ist) Ethics

*Today we carry on with [Leopold's] work and, not surprisingly, there still are people fighting the truth. Wild nature calls for wild wolves; a healthy environment requires wolves. We will continue to fight for the wolf – the mountain demands it.*²⁴

In appealing to the mountain’s “demands,” Stephen Capra, the president of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, was of course referencing Aldo Leopold’s “thinking like a mountain” essay, in which Leopold argued that “only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf” ([1949] 1987: 129) For Leopold, the broad implication of this form of listening was that a more accurate perception of land health – the ability to judge whether a biotic community was flourishing – was enabled only by a perspective that extended beyond the limits of a human lifetime. Wolves, even when they do not contribute to short-term economic bottom lines, certainly may contribute to “the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community” ([1949] 1987: 224-25), providing environmentalists with multiple reasons “to fight for the wolf.”

²⁴ Excerpted from Capra (2007: 8-9).

In this section, I discuss environmental groups and their representatives in the Southwest who have been most involved in wolf reintroduction issues. These environmentalists share a constellation of basic narratives, views, and ethics that distinguish them markedly – though not completely – from ranchers and government employees.

As it is for ranchers, it is difficult to single out any unifying ethic for environmentalists, who are diverse in their views and orientations. However, from deep to shallow ecology, from biocentrism to a weak anthropocentrism, environmentalists generally adhere to a “land ethic” that advocates for the interests of other species with the aim of “harmony” or “balance.” Aldo Leopold figures prominently in informing this perspective. Environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicott noted that while there was no fixed definition of environmental ethics, Leopold “is universally recognized as the father or founding genius of recent environmental ethics. His ‘land ethic’ has become a modern classic and may be treated as the standard example, the paradigm case, as it were, of what an environmental ethic is” (1989a: 15).²⁵ This land ethic, articulated by Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac*, is: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to do otherwise” ([1949] 1987: 224-25).

Few environmentalists involved in wolf recovery are engaged in debating the finer points of environmental philosophy, but Leopold’s “land ethic” remains well known and influential as a baseline. All of the environmentalists with whom I spoke, unsurprisingly, had read Leopold,

²⁵ Callicott has since “updated” Leopold’s land ethic to correspond to the field of ecology’s more dynamic understandings of natural processes: “A thing is right when it tends to disturb the biotic community only at normal spatial and temporal scales. It is wrong when it tends to do otherwise” (Callicott 2001: 216). Though environmentalists may be aware of such a shift in language and models with regard to ecosystem science, in popular venues, advocacy literature, and everyday speech, words such as “harmony” and “balance” are still much more prevalent than other descriptive terms. As sociologist Jan Dizard commented, “the general public is not bound by the discipline of refereed journals and peer reviews. As a matter of fact, the public tends to be skeptical of science, preferring faith and feelings and, we can now add, a belief in a self-healing nature that, given the chance, will produce stability and balance” (2001: 85).

and, when asked about the ethics of wolf reintroduction, expressed a deep affinity with Leopold's land ethic, even when they did not repeat its wording verbatim. As Janice Przybyl, the Sky Island Alliance's wildlife linkages program director, remarked, Leopold's land ethic helped her "have somebody put into words exactly what I was feeling" (interview, 8 June 2007, Tucson, AZ).

Moreover, the reintroduction of wolves to the Blue Range has particular resonance with many wolf and wilderness advocates because of the location's association with Leopold. Not only was the Blue Range the likely spot where Leopold experienced the moment that led to his famous "green fire" parable,²⁶ the Gila Wilderness is included within the larger Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area and was the first designated wilderness area (1924) in the United States, an effort in which Leopold played a critical role. The conjunction of "green fire" with the "spirit" of wilderness has not been lost on those who wish to redeem the Southwest in Leopold's name. As one writer argued, "Stepping back a bit, we can recognize that this struggle is not just about the wolf. It's about competing visions of life in the American West. ... We are engaged in a difficult transition from a frontier to a bioregional vision of the west. No one epitomizes that transition more than Aldo Leopold..." (Lynch 2005: 4).

Leopold's "land ethic" in general, and the "green fire" narrative in particular, are so frequently cited in the literature about wolves, both popular and scholarly, as to be inescapable. In my view, the "green fire" parable and its more formal expression as a "land ethic" serve as the twin pylons of a foundational myth for environmentalists interested in wolf recovery, evoking a

²⁶ As Curt Meine, Leopold's foremost biographer, noted, no one really knows where the event took place. Through a process of documentary triangulation, Meine suggests that the most likely year was 1909, Leopold's first year working for the Forest Service in the Southwest (Meine 1988: 91-94; 543, n. 10), which would have put him in the area of the Blue Range where he was doing timber surveys at the time.

holistic view of natural processes and dynamic forces kept in check by their own internal mechanisms.²⁷

But it is not just on the page that Leopold's name is invoked. In 2003, a "Leopold Forum" was organized in Las Cruces, New Mexico, in part to honor the 70th anniversary of an important speech Leopold delivered that was a prelude to his "land ethic," but more pragmatically to bring together various constituencies to discuss Mexican wolf reintroduction (Weisiger 2004: 126). The organizer described the reason for the forum's title as "karmic," since wolves played a significant role in Leopold's own developing views of the biotic community after a period in which he supported their eradication (Weisiger 2004: 127). Participants at the conference, as might be expected, frequently referenced Leopold – so much so that a kind of "What Would Leopold Do?" aura hung over the proceedings (see, for example, Weisiger 2004: 136, 140).

In addition to Leopold's narrative, environmentalists who are wolf recovery advocates often appeal to the "balance" of nature, a term that signals an ideal equilibrium that, were it not for pernicious forms of human interference, could be realized. In short, the natural world is viewed as an ultimate reference point of departure and comparison for cultural, spiritual, biological, and psychological health. According to Rob Smith, the Southwest director of the Sierra Club, though he and his family attend an Episcopal church, the Sierra Club tends to attract people who consider themselves "spiritual" and who "don't want to talk about religion in Sierra

²⁷ One wonders what would fill the narrative vacuum had Leopold not penned the tale. As one representative example, take the interdisciplinary edited volume dealing with the feasibility of proposals for wolf reintroduction to the Adirondacks, *Wolves and Human Communities* (2001). Leopold is referenced as an authority repeatedly; he is noted in the introduction to the book (3); his "land ethic" receives some attention (105, 191ff); the "green fire" story is invoked multiple times (192, 202, 274), and one section of the book (out of seven) is entitled "Thinking Like a Mountain" (209-253). See in particular, Donnelly (2001: 191-197), who argued, "Human individuals and communities endemically need some form of cosmogonic myth, some basic philosophical, moral, and spiritual orientation. Leopold offers us a wild cosmogony to undergird and help explain his land ethic and our ultimate moral responsibilities" (193).

Club meetings” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ).²⁸ Nevertheless, “A lot of [Sierra Club members] certainly talk about the spiritual nature of the outdoors” (ibid.). As Smith’s comments indicated, while environmental activists may shy from or be uncomfortable with institutional religion, it is common that they practice some form of nature spirituality that finds its roots in perceptions of healthy, spacious, and biodiverse places. Other activists with whom I spoke talked about nature as a refuge, or even as a church. Wildlands, in this view, were a place apart from the workaday world, where one could find solace as well as a sense of the limits of human importance.

Indeed, some of those who work on wolf recovery issues were led to their activism by an understanding that their personal spirituality was connected to the wholeness and health of the natural world. Craig Miller, the Southwest representative for Defenders of Wildlife who has been the lead Defenders’ staff member for Mexican wolf reintroduction, noted,

Getting back to that stillness, that place of peace, that I sometimes find in meditation – that supports ... that drive to promote life and diversity. That’s what brings me fullness or when I feel most connected to life or most connected to God, if you will, is in my contact with nature, and the more of it the better. ...It’s going to sound crazy, but I really sensed that something was missing [when he was in wild areas] – and it’s not just wolves, it’s something more that’s missing. I really felt I was inspired to do something about it, to contribute to it, to be part of that relationship growth (interview, 8 June 2007, Tucson, AZ).

People who are concerned enough with environmental issues to dedicate their careers or avocations to wildlife advocacy are typically well aware of the depth of human impacts on the natural world. This concern is frequently yoked to the feeling that, especially in Western,

²⁸ The Sierra Club, under the leadership of executive director Carl Pope, has been attempting to partner and reach out to those in religious communities (see Van Horn and Taylor 2005). I asked Smith about this, and he confirmed that Pope does have an interest in reaching people who share deep values about the environment that are religiously based: “[Pope] will speak about really the reason we all came here [to the Sierra Club] is because there’s something inside of us that’s not rational, it’s more of an emotional value or spiritually driven response thing. There’s a sense of ‘I want to be here because it’s the right thing to do.’ That’s what motivates people to be active on anything. ...Can’t we really all agree that having nature whole again, having wolves, is a good thing?” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ).

industrially dependent cultures, humans suffer from the misperception that they have exclusive claims on other species. The rapidity with which wolves were eradicated from nearly all of the contiguous United States lends itself to reinforcing an environmental narrative that humans are wildly out of balance with the rest of the natural world.

Wolves and Environmentalists

Whether drawing from an evolutionarily based narrative, some form of earthen spirituality, or both, the wolf and wilderness advocates with whom I spoke often expressed a perception of humans as a species that disrupts the integrity of the natural world. Restoring wolves was thus understood as an attempt to recognize the worth of other species and put in proper perspective the human place in relation to the whole. As Kieran Suckling, the executive director for the Center for Biological Diversity, asserted, “We have a moral responsibility and a desire to live in balance with other species, to give other species a chance to simply live their lives ... and to do that we’ve got to reintroduce the [Mexican] wolf because otherwise we’re sentencing it to die in a zoo” (Suckling, in Boggs ([1999] 2005: 205).

Suckling touched on another important aspect of wolf reintroduction among environmentalists when he referenced captive wolves. From the environmentalist’s perspective, wolves, like other wild animals, *should* be “free,” unconfined and minimally managed (if at all) by humans. Wolves figure prominently as a symbol of wildness in this regard. By way of contrast, domesticated animals are often viewed with various degrees of suspicion or disdain. As Callicott explained, “Environmental ethics sets a very low priority on domestic animals as they very frequently contribute to the erosion of the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic communities into which they have been insinuated” (Callicott 1989a: 37).

Michael Robinson, a conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity who is heavily involved in Southwestern wolf recovery issues, has been highly critical of livestock

management practices in the Southwest, which he views as the chief obstacle standing in the way of the wolf recovery program's success. Robinson's views would be offensive to most livestock ranchers. For instance, though Robinson told me he acknowledged that livestock owners have problems, he also stated plainly that his job was not to solve them. When I asked him if there were any conditions under which cattle should be in the Southwest, he said, "From a biological point of view, they don't belong," and though he was "not in the business of telling people how to use their private lands ... if we're talking about public lands, the answer is no" (interview, 5 June 2007, Piños Altos, NM).

Even environmentalists who support compromises regarding livestock grazing and other public land uses insist that all creatures and land uses are not equal, nor should they be treated as such. Jean Ossorio, a former board member of the Southwest Environmental Center, commented that

There's only a handful of ranchers that are really the problem. I mean, it's a handful that have the vast majority of depredations on their allotments. One thing that I always reiterate to everyone is that the recovery area is 95% public land ... so all this stuff is happening on land that belongs to you and me, and our uncles and our cousins and our aunts, and it does not belong to these folks. They're grazing cows on there for a buck thirty-five a month. They get paid for the cows [by Defenders of Wildlife] and get the wolves out, which to my mind is not justice. ... It's multiple use for heaven's sake – you put up with stuff, including endangered species, because it's public land, not private (interview, 5 June 2007, Las Cruces, NM; see also Valdez 2008).

From her perspective, a tremendous amount of effort had been spent on mollifying ranchers' concerns, "And then we're wasting wolves by shooting them for eating cows that are paid for. My feeling is that if you're paid for them ... you shouldn't have the wolf removed" (ibid.). For environmentalists, if choices must be made about what stays and what goes, if animals (or plants, or abiotic elements) must be prioritized, the ultimate criteria to which one should appeal is the potential impact on an ecosystem.

Despite “wolf lover” caricatures, there is more to environmental concern than the celebrity wolves have recently been privileged to receive. Environmentalists may be drawn to charismatic animals like wolves on a personal level, and they may not. Some of those with whom I spoke made a point of noting that they had no special personal affection for or bond with wolves. As Craig Miller put it, wolves “are not my totem. ...I feel much closer to tree frogs” (interview, 8 June 2007, Tucson, AZ).²⁹

According to Miller and others, the iconic quality that wolves have assumed in the public eye was most beneficial insofar as it catalyzed peoples’ thinking about larger ecological concerns. In this sense, wolves served as a gateway into thinking about larger issues such as habitat fragmentation, the problems of urban and suburban sprawl, human population growth, ecosystem science, biodiversity, wildlands connectivity, and a host of regional and even national environmental problems. Michael Robinson represented this position well: “Wolves are a key missing part of many ecosystems, or this ecosystem, highly endangered, they have enormous influence on the workings – ecosystems’ interactions – between numerous species, animal and plant, and they’re a part of the world that I want to save” (interview, 5 June 2007, Piños Altos, NM). The ecological benefits made possible by the presence of wolves are critical to those who envision a world they “want to save.” What needs “saving,” from this perspective, is something that approximates completeness, or at least facilitates the opportunity for further evolutionary

²⁹ In environmental circles, wolves may also be an icon that acts as a counterweight to other popular cultural icons. For example, ranching – and the cowboy mythos with it – has received different symbolic grades based on public opinion, and in at least some cases, people have brought these two symbols together to face off against one another. Jean Ossorio related a story to me about an acquaintance she took to a public meeting on wolf reintroduction: “Anyway, I rode up with [my friend] and he was talking about how he thinks that the wolf, one of the reasons the cowboys are so nervous about it, and it means so much to them, is it’s the only figure that they’ve run into in these arguments and the whole conflict out here on the public lands that is as powerful as the icon of the cowboy, the Marlboro Man. He said, ‘You know to be honest with you, I like wolves okay, but the reason I’m pushing this so hard ... I think this is powerful enough to actually make a difference, to actually get people to wake up.’ ...So in that case I think it was an icon for wildness as opposed to the domination of our public lands by grazers” (interview, 5 June 2007, Las Cruces, NM).

possibilities. Wolves, as a top-level carnivore, are thus a focusing mechanism for envisioning a world not utterly dominated by human interests.

Craig Miller saw wolves as one lever of change that confronted people with questions about what types of human lifestyles are conducive to healthy relationships with the natural world. He stated,

Once wolves are on the landscape they almost instantaneously confront other types of human land uses and require reconsideration of them. What is the role of man? What is the role of wolves? And which deserves the higher priority – a wolf, or cow, or an off-road vehicle, or a guy with his shotgun? It's confrontational but it can also be managed in a way that it's productive, and that we arrive at a solution about that results in a better, more supportive relationship between humans and nature (interview, 8 June 2007, Tucson, AZ).

Some may ask if this puts too much weight on the shoulders of one species. Robinson did not think so: "For every newspaper article on wolves, there's not a lack of other articles on other creatures... Wolves are one way that people can develop an emotional attachment to nature. More so than invertebrates or something else..." (interview, 5 June 2007, Piños Altos, NM). Several environmentalists with whom I spoke, perhaps because of accusations of being "wolf-lovers," were quick to tell me that they did not particularly favor wolves among other animal species. More surprising to me, several did not express any eagerness to actually see wolves in the wild. "Just knowing wolves are there" was enough, in that large predators like wolves represented healthy or recovering lands. Or as Rob Smith put it, knowing wolves were in the Southwest signaled that the lands that they were on were correspondingly "primeval" and "wild," which in his view meant that "this is a natural place, and it's good" (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ).

By way of contrast, "just knowing wolves are there," was not enough for Jean Ossorio, who knew the Mexican wolves by number, name, and pack better than anyone with whom I spoke. She often wears wolf T-shirts and other paraphernalia so that she might strike up a

conversation with interested persons, but it was a bracelet on her wrist, which read “Maska 131,” that most captured my attention. In 1999, while participating in a wolf tracking trip, Ossorio saw her first wild Mexican wolf, and when this wolf howled, Ossorio recalled that she turned to her husband and said, “Okay, I can die now. I’ve done it all” (interview, 5 June 2007, Las Cruces, NM). Maska (whose studbook number was 131) eventually had to be euthanized by the recovery team because he was suffering from a brain tumor, but Ossorio wears the bracelet as a reminder of the shared sense of connection she had with this particular Mexican wolf.

On perhaps a more basic level, environmental advocates often express sympathy for predators like wolves because their presence may serve to abrogate human arrogance. Though Doug Bland had not yet heard or seen a wolf in Arizona, he told me that he “longs” for that experience since “it would be something that would open my soul a bit more, just to hear that” (phone interview, 2 April 2008). When I asked him to explain this, he responded: “I think it has something to do with – maybe I’d liken it to the speech of God from the whirlwind [*a reference to God’s theophany in Job 38.1-42.6*] – questions about a world that is just bigger than me, which makes me feel at the same time smaller and more connected with something bigger than I am, something I don’t have ultimate control over” (ibid.). Though many environmentalists may opt for less theistic language, the idea of wolves being able to connect humans to “something bigger” that they “don’t have ultimate control over” is a common outlook.

Ethicist William Lynn observed that Defenders of Wildlife employees and members, while rejecting animal-focused moral arguments for fear of being labeled “extremists,” are nonetheless “manifestly ethical” (2002: 312). Personal conversations led him to conclude that Defenders employees are interested in “restitution for past harms to a member of the biotic community, conserving a biological heritage for our children and future generations, the restoration of

predatory functions that improve human, animal and ecosystem health, and an opportunity to begin living a more sustainable life,” and that wolf reintroduction “is a necessary step towards reweaving the moral order of nature and culture” (Lynn 2002: 312). Though Defenders of Wildlife may shy from overt moral prescription, it is clear that a moral passion for wildlife motivates its programs and actions.

I found Lynn’s observations to be an accurate description of those activists with whom I spoke. Robinson told me he feels a “moral duty” to reverse the damage done in the past, something “based on my values that [wolf eradication] was a cruel and destructive practice ... and if we want a beautiful and wild world in all senses ... that we should ensure recovery of wolves” (interview, 5 June 2007, Piños Altos, NM). Similarly, Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter outreach director Sandy Bahr commented, “I think that we have a responsibility because we were the cause of their demise. ... I think that’s sort of the crux of the Endangered Species Act, where we have contributed significantly to the demise of plants and animals, and we have, yes, a moral obligation and responsibility to bring them back” (interview, 20 July 2007, Phoenix, AZ).

Future Visions: Keeping Land Healthy for All Creatures

Among environmentalists who work on wolf issues, there are a great number of concerns wrapped into talk about wolves. Wolf recovery is one component of a larger land ethic, but it is also related to human persistence and quality of life – what I refer to, following philosopher Bryan Norton, as “weak anthropocentrism.”³⁰ That is, unlike “strong anthropocentrism,” human

³⁰ Because the term anthropocentrism casts such a wide net in describing diverse worldviews, Norton (1984) distinguished between strong and weak anthropocentrism, and argued that an environmental ethic need not appeal to “intrinsic value” if it was weakly anthropocentric. While environmentalists’ worldviews might be characterized as bio- or eco-centric, their political and public rhetoric – like John Muir’s, Aldo Leopold’s, and Rachel Carson’s – is predominantly focused on the human benefits of healthy environments (a topic Norton [1991] takes up elsewhere). In my view, “weak anthropocentrism” captures this view well, and highlights the political strategy of building consensus with groups that are focused more exclusively on human interests.

preferences are not prioritized in every situation in which conflicts of interests are involved.

Depending on the contextual particularities, optimal landscape health may dictate that human use be mitigated or eliminated. However, this does not mean that environmentalists think humans should not utilize the natural world or that they do not work with both long- and short-term goals in mind for human communities.

Craig Miller summarized the mix of environmental goals well when he described the various ethical demands of conservation:

We have a responsibility to make those decisions about what species survive in perpetuity for a variety of reasons: for their own well being, for the security of the earth and nature, for ourselves and the well being of human communities, as well as for our children and grandchildren. ...I'm a father and, having kids, I really do take that responsibility seriously. It really does strike home when I think about the challenges that my kids are already facing. ...We have an ethical obligation to share that with them, at least keep conscientious about that – what we're leaving them (interview, 8 June 2007, Tucson, AZ).

Like ranchers, environmentalists think about *their* children, too: the legacy of their work, the quality of lands that they would like to pass into their care, and what kind of world they want for them. Environmentalists, however, typically use language that expresses concern for not only their own children and/or immediate community but also for future generations of all biological life.

This is one reason that wolf reintroduction and recovery is viewed as rife with larger implications. Jean Ossorio, who has been active in wolf advocacy for almost three decades, reflected on these concerns in the following manner:

I don't know how to express it exactly; I kind of see the planet and the biosphere as a big organism, and I think we're all kind of chunks and parts of that. I don't see a hierarchy of critters with humans sitting up at the top. I think we're a part of it, and frankly, to my mind, it's a very practical thing these days to perceive yourself as a part of it because otherwise we're going to lose the battle for the climate and various other things (interview, 5 June 2007, Las Cruces, NM).

Ossorio's views, while individually expressed, nevertheless highlight some common themes across the environmentalist spectrum. One, humans are not separate from other forms of life; they are "chunks and parts" of an organismic biosphere, sharing in the interdependence of all life. Second, Ossorio's "practical" view that humans are better off viewing themselves as part of this organism, rather than as superior to other "critters," illustrates a core difference between many environmentalists in comparison to the other groups discussed in this chapter.

The idea that humans share a basic kinship should, many wildlife and wilderness advocates contend, give humans pause when it comes to decisions about landscape health, as well as inspire a vision of the future in which the human relationship to nature is characterized more by respect than by destructive manipulation. Within a master narrative of ecological well being, humans are primordially and ultimately at "home" in nature. Human importance is relativized in such a narrative understanding of evolutionary origins and continuance.

Miller said that, from his own perspective (not necessarily Defenders'), because the United States' political system is pulled in different ideological directions,

What's necessary is to re-shape the relationship between humans and nature. The challenge there is – in a sense that's like trying to change someone's religion. That's a very tactful way of putting it. The change comes very slow. But if we don't appreciate our relationship with nature, it's not just going to be wolf recovery [that suffers], it's going to be livestock grazing, forest production, all types of human agriculture... That's just the beginning. We're on a collision course of unsustainability unless we understand and change our relationship to nature (interview, 8 June 2007, Tucson, AZ).

Sandy Bahr expressed a similar feeling when she said,

I think that ultimately if we're going to inhabit the planet for a longer term then we need to figure out a better way to interact with nature than we're doing right now – and that includes with wild animals. ... We need to figure out a way to just have things be – not always having to tinker as much. I know we [members of the Sierra Club] advocate for tinkering with animals that are disappearing or wolves would be gone, but over time, I think we need to figure out a minimalist approach and not try to overmanage (interview, 20 July 2007, Phoenix, AZ).

As Bahr indicated, activists generally see invasive management of wild species as unwelcome, in that it signals a continued attempt to control nature. However, environmentalists do not simply frame their hopes in terms of what to avoid; they also have future goals and ideals that they would like to see come to fruition. People do not stay politically involved for long without some sort of future vision of what the world *could* look like; nor do they persist in their work without some moral compass that directs their energy and goals.

Ossorio offered a representative example of why wolves are considered an important part of such a future. In reference to wolf recovery in the Southwest, she stated,

I see it as a restoration not reintroduction. It's a restoration and a making whole again something that we deliberately destroyed that was not really ours to destroy. ...[W]e've gone way overboard in exerting dominance without much thought to the consequences and we're paying a price. ... Trying to restore some feeling of wholeness is really important to me (interview, 5 June 2007, Las Cruces, AZ).

Miller noted that wolf reintroduction – like so many environmental concerns – requires persistence. He described himself as “super optimistic” about the future now that wolves have a “foothold” in the wild (interview, 8 June 2007, Tucson, AZ). He told me he saw progress not only in the Northern Rockies, where wolf numbers have dramatically exceeded projections, but that there also seems to be some movement to reintroduce wolves in Mexico. Because of wolves' proclivity to disperse and travel long distances, they are a significant animal for advocating such a vision. Similar to the goals expressed by the Wildlands Project, Miller said, “I'm confident within 20-25 years we will have a functional population from the Sierra Madre to northern Canada, and that will include the Southwest and a connection through the Rocky Mountains” (ibid.).³¹

³¹ For conservation biologists, and wilderness and wildlife advocates informed by these scientists, the connectivity of wolf populations from Mexico to Canada is part of a broader vision of landscape “linkages” that would ensure genetic flow between what are now isolated populations (see Foreman 2004; Povilitis *et al.* 2006: 944-45). The 1992 mission statement of the Wildlands Project articulates this clearly: “Our vision is simple: we live for the day

Thinking in terms of long time-frames is part of an ecological education that Aldo Leopold endorsed ([1949] 1987: 207-210, 224). For environmentalists who actively support wolf recovery, wolves may help lead the way into such a future. As Defenders of Wildlife president Rodger Schlickeisen wrote,

For better or worse, humans are playing the godlike role of determining which species will survive and where. ... Whether or how society will develop a more holistic and environmentally friendly attitude is not yet clear. But one of the best indicators is our evolving attitude toward wolves. ... If American society, especially the population living near reintroduction-designated areas, can accept the wolf as a neighbor, it will be a very positive sign of our capacity to elevate our view of wild species and adopt a more ecologically healthy attitude toward the natural world (2001: 61).

If humans cannot help restore the balance, some environmentalists argue, “mother nature” just might. As Charlie Allen, a conservation practitioner for The Nature Conservancy told me, he knew everything would be fine in half a million years, but until then he would fight – for wolves, bighorn sheep, mountain lions, healthy rivers, and all forms of life – because he was morally compelled to do so (interview, 10 July 2007, Winkelman, AZ).

Managerial Ethics

We have a joke around here that “You know you’re doing the right job if everybody’s mad at ya.”³²

Wildlife departments in most states, including New Mexico and Arizona, still go under names that hearken back to the beginnings of governmental predator eradication. “Fish and game,” as historian Patricia Limerick noted, signaled “that the animal kingdom had been sorted out and classified according to merit. The good animals – the fishable, huntable trophy animals

when Grizzlies in Chihuahua have an unbroken connection to Grizzlies in Alaska; when Gray Wolf populations are continuous from New Mexico to Greenland; when vast unbroken forests and flowing plains again thrive and support pre-Columbian populations of plants and animals; when humans dwell with respect, harmony, and affection for the land; when we come to live no longer as strangers and aliens on this continent” (in Foreman 2004: 143).

³² Dan Groebner, Arizona Game and Fish nongame specialist (interview, 13 July 2007, Pinetop, AZ).

– had a bureau devoted to their protection; the bad ones did not” (1987: 311-312). Though both New Mexico and Arizona now have nongame and/or wildlife divisions, they retain their mission as public servants who manage state lands for multiple human uses.³³

The public pressure that government biologists face at the beginning of the twenty-first century is markedly different from the support (tacit and explicit) for predator eradication campaigns of the early twentieth century. In the 1982 Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan, the authors noted, “People far removed from the scene of action, who will never own a cow or meet a wolf, are taught to abhor and fear the malefactor, and to applaud its death and even its suffering” (Ames [1982] 2005: 110). Currently, people “far removed from the scene of the action,” at least for the time being, demand wolves and “applaud” their recovery. Thus, for government employees charged with juggling local and national demands, they must manage not only reintroduced wolves but conflicting public values, opinions, and landscape visions for the future.

Public pressure was decisive in moving the reintroduction process forward in the Southwest, yet it could not have been accomplished without the work of interested federal and state wildlife managers. This factor should not be overlooked, for it indicates values among individual wildlife managers that may not be as freely expressed at an “official” level, where evenhandedness is critical in the attempt to understand and ameliorate resistance. I highlight

³³ AGFD’s mission statement reads as follows: “To conserve, enhance, and restore Arizona’s diverse wildlife resources and habitats through aggressive protection and management programs, and to provide wildlife resources and safe watercraft and off-highway vehicle recreation for the enjoyment, appreciation, and use by present and future generations” (online: http://www.azgfd.com/inside_azgfd/inside_azgfd.shtml [accessed 12 May 2008]). Note that wildlife “resources” are protected for present and future generations; that these are human generations is so much a supposition that it is not even explicitly stated. While there is no mission statement available on NMDGF’s website, the following “Memorandum of Understanding” echoed AGFD’s mission in terms of wildlife “resources” held in “public trust”: “WHEREAS, the NMDGF, a State resource agency, has determined that direct participation in reestablishment of the Mexican wolf would be consistent with its mandates under the New Mexico Wildlife Conservation Act, and is essential to representing the State’s mandates and authorities for management of all protected wildlife resources that are held as a public trust for the people of New Mexico” (online: http://www.azgfd.gov/w_c/wolf/documents/MexicanWolf_MOU_200310311_000.pdf [accessed 11 May 2008]).

some of these values in this section, noting particularly how they might be informed by an evolutionary narrative that provides reasons for valuing landscape resilience. These values are publicly constrained and expressed through what I refer to as a “managerial ethic,” an ethic that presupposes that (qualified) humans must actively and “objectively” manage the natural world to reach public consensus.

Dan Groebner provided a wonderful example of an inherent tension that exists for wildlife managers, who must negotiate between their professional responsibilities and personal affinities:

We just try to provide the facts and let people make their own minds up and try to stay out of the value judgment part of it. As a state agency, I’ve been [*pauses, searching for word*] made aware that ... we can’t legislate morality. We should stay away from trying to say we have a moral obligation to reintroduce an endangered species because that does get into values kind of things. We are obviously value-driven, but we don’t want to impose our values on other people. We can use our values to manage the resources the best we can but to tell other people how to think is a different step. We can tell ‘em we think wolves should be out there. But we should be careful about telling ‘em you should want them out there, too, which is kind of a fine line [*laughs*]. People ask me, well, why are you even doing this, personally? Obviously we all have – I’m not just in it for the scientific part of it – I think we have an obligation myself, but to try to impose that on other people is a tough step (interview, 13 July 2007, Pinetop, AZ).

Indeed, being personally motivated to recover an endangered species and manage “the resources” without imposing one’s personal values on others is a fine line – a nearly impossible task, maybe, for there is an implicit value at work in calling a species endangered, and certainly in the “obligation” to recover a species.

This managerial dilemma is elucidated by environmental philosopher Bryan Norton, who highlighted that, historically, North Americans have sought to bestow two “bequests” on future generations, one spiritual/moral/cultural and one economic. As Norton noted,

North American nations have, in my view correctly, tried to minimize the role of their government and public actions in shaping the spiritual aspect of intergenerational bequests. To the extent they have succeeded, the religious bequest has become mainly a matter for the private sector. Accordingly, most writers who have examined the question of the nature of our publicly provided bequest – what we should empower our governments to

help us accomplish as a society – have focused mainly on the economic and utilitarian aspects of the bequest (2001: 213).

Yet, as Norton argued, economic and moral bequests do not necessarily address the biological bequest that North Americans leave to future generations.³⁴ Frequently, in my view, government agencies that deal with wildlife issues are caught on the horns of this dilemma. There are indeed ethical and moral underpinnings for valuing wildlife (the “biological bequest”), but at a policy level government agencies typically justify their actions through a utilitarian paradigm, the greatest good for the greatest number of *human* citizens.

Thus, both by precedent and as a part of their role in serving different land-use interests, public employees at both state and federal levels who must deal with the nitty-gritty details of wolf management largely rely on scientific data and legal mandates for their authority to manage wolves. Though science may be commonly treated as an “objective” tool, beyond reproach, one should not overlook, as Groebner indicated, that values inhere to scientific methodology and the uses to which it is put.³⁵ Barry Lopez, whose book *Of Wolves and Men* remains a milestone in detailing what wolves have meant to various cultures, wrote that

The methodology of science creates a wolf just as surely as does the metaphysical vision of a native American, or the enmity of a cattle baron of the nineteenth century. It is only by

³⁴ In this article, Norton eventually argued that biological diversity (understood as “a process that generates and sustains multiple evolutionary regimens, and hence creates greater variety across time”) has both a moral and scientific basis when the social values of nature are conceived in “multiscalar” terms; that is, as a matter of “intergenerational fairness” and through a process of community self-definition.

³⁵ For an especially astute treatment of the ways in which science crosses into the realms of myth, and is influenced by cultural presuppositions, see Mary Midgley’s *Evolution as a Religion* (2002), particularly chapter four, in which she discusses evolution as “the creation myth of our age” since it influences our feelings and actions “in a way that goes far beyond its official function as a biological theory” (2002: 33). The appeal to scientific authority is common to those both for and against wolf reintroduction. At least one study (Hardy-Short and Short 2000) found that from 1987-1999, it was not simply wildlife managers or wolf advocates who relied on science to bolster their claims; increasingly, wolf opponents used scientific arguments to justify their opposition. Terry Johnson, the AGFD nongame director, frankly acknowledged the kinds of problems this creates: “It’s always my science versus your science. My science is better because my science has more Ph.D.s attached to it. Or fewer Ph.D.s. Or my Ph.D.s came from the right universities and yours didn’t” (2 October 2005, “Frontiers of Wolf Recovery” conference, Colorado Springs, CO, recording in author’s possession).

convention that the first is considered enlightened observation, the second fanciful anthropomorphism, and the third agricultural necessity ([1978] 2004: 203).

Lopez's assertion about scientific methods highlights how such methods are not value-free but are deeply shaped by cultural assumptions. For evidence that this is the case, one may note that most scientists condemned wolves as undesirables in the United States well into the twentieth century, using all available technologies at their disposal to eradicate them more efficiently.

Because scientific authority tends to cast a cloak of invisibility around the justifications for wolf recovery, it is necessary to dig deeper if one is interested in the kind of values that inform wildlife management. The Endangered Species Act provides an eloquent summation of how the government, and by proxy government employees, frame wolf reintroductions: "these species of fish, wildlife, and plants are of esthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people" (ESA 1973). This anthropocentric focus of value "to the Nation and its people" does not necessarily preclude other types of values, but it certainly focuses attention on how endangered species' recovery benefits humans.

Perhaps understandably, given the controversy of wolf reintroduction, the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Mexican wolf recovery maintains a scientific tone throughout its pages. Despite fielding questions and comments from over 18,000 groups and individuals, the authors³⁶ demurred from particular "value judgments" regarding "philosophical/ethical considerations," as the following comment indicated:

Impacts involving long-term evolutionary or philosophical concerns. These include "are wolves an essential component of the ecosystem?", "should wild lands be restored and conserved?", and "do wolves have a right to exist?" These are policy questions involving value judgments rather than environmental impacts. Their consideration is either not required by the National Environmental Policy Act or would be beyond the reasonable coverage of this EIS (FWS 1996: 1.11).

³⁶ The FWS was the government agency charged with constructing an Environmental Impact Statement, but there were numerous advisors and contributors (see the "List of Preparers" in FWS 1996).

Rather, the EIS asserts that conserving Mexican wolves is a matter of their rarity and because it is a “duty” under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act (FWS 1996: 1.1-2). Thus, though the public may value wolves for a number of reasons (including those mentioned in the ESA, such as esthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific values), government justifications for wolf recovery have tended to highlight ecological and scientific “environmental impacts,” while attempting to filter out (subjective) “value judgments.”

As a political mediator trying to please a number of public, private, rural, urban, national, and state-level constituencies, the EIS underscores the manner in which the FWS has tried to minimize controversy by playing an objective role. Except for expressing desires for humane control and capture methods, ethical considerations are left inexplicit or avoided (FWS 1996: 5.131).

In the five-year review of the program, however, the project managers were more forthcoming, particularly in their “responses to public comments component.”³⁷ At least one public comment (MW 2005: ARPCC-46, 47, no. 165), challenged the program directly on ethical grounds – calling the ethical foundation of the program and its review “weak” – and suggested that lethal control should be minimized, proactive nonlethal measures pursued, and that an ethical component should be added to the other reports (i.e., in addition to the technical, administrative, and socioeconomic components). The Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC), the lead author of the five-year review, responded:

AMOC does not consider the Reintroduction Project or the 5-Year Review to be “ethically weak.” AMOC has assiduously pursued [an] objective, balanced review of the relevant issues. If shortfalls in results have occurred, and this Comment provided no evidence they have, they are not due to lack of ethics. In any case, emphasizing one management construct over another should be a result of assessing the strengths (benefits) and weaknesses (costs) of each and determining which best meets the given situation (need).

³⁷ This two-hundred and fifty-nine page document included AMOC responses to written and oral public comments about the five-year review (MW 2005), as well as various procedural facets of the program.

Lethal and nonlethal mechanisms of wolf control are advocated and applied on that basis, i.e. appropriateness and effectiveness, not because one is arbitrarily deemed morally superior to the other. “Living with predators” [*a reference to non-profit organizations that advocate proactive nonlethal wildlife management*] is a concept that should indeed be considered by all humans occupying landscapes on which predators occur, but ascribing some sort of moral high ground to it would be inappropriate for a government entity such as AMOC (MW 2005: ARPCC-47).

The response is telling, indicating a cost-benefit analysis which does not rely on “arbitrary” ascriptions of value for decision-making. Even while the response purports to eschew “some sort of moral high ground,” there is nevertheless an “objective, balanced” high ground to which it appeals.

Alongside the official provisions for management, however, are the personal feelings of those who enter into the field of wildlife biology because of some degree of affinity for wild animals. Many of the state and federal employees directly involved in wolf recovery are trained in ecosystem science in the classroom – but what got them in those classrooms may have more to do with personal connections to place and other animals. Because it would be imprudent amidst a political maelstrom to profess these kinds of feelings, the best source of information about such values may be those persons who have retired from the on-the-ground (or behind-the-desk) fray.

Don Hoffman is one such person. Hoffman retired from the U.S. Forest Service in 2001, after twenty five years of working in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, a core area for Mexican wolf recovery efforts. He was heavily involved with the program up through and beyond the initial reintroduction. After his retirement, he served as executive director for the Arizona Wilderness Coalition until 2006. He presently lives deep within the forest he once worked, on the western edge of Catron County, New Mexico.

Hoffman told me that he began his studies in business administration before his interest flagged because of the moral conflicts he had about exploiting people. Following an influential meeting with a forestry professor from Northern Arizona University, he switched career paths

and got a Masters degree in forestry. Despite the change in vocational direction, he noted the irony of how his degree in business administration was looked upon approvingly by the Forest Service. To him, this initially came as a surprise. Hoffman explained:

God, well here I am again, you know, with people that don't necessarily have environmental ethics, but it was all about management of forests as a commodity, that's really the only program they taught at NAU, which was a top forestry school but it was just focused on timber management ... [like] what uses could you incorporate into a full-blown timber management program. ... The first goal was maximum yield of fiber, and the second goals were to have all these other uses: wildlife, livestock, recreation and watershed at least sustain themselves, but the focus was more on silviculture and managing trees for the benefit of producing fiber (interview, 11 July 2007, near Alpine, AZ).

Hoffman felt he was well tolerated for his more environmental focus, but recognized a fundamental difference in opinion and outlook between himself and most of his colleagues.

What it really comes down to is most people that are into land management believe land should be managed. I mean, that's why you went to resource management school to begin with. ... Even in nongame [departments] I think they are still looking for what are the human benefits of doing this. ... Then when [wildlife managers] want to put wolves into the Blue Range Primitive Area or Wilderness Area, they are like, well, we should be able to use helicopters and nets. ... They couldn't be humble enough to understand the wilderness philosophy, because it was all about their need to manage. You see that again, and again, and again, particularly within science groups and managing agencies (ibid.).

Later in our conversation, Hoffman revisited this difference in values between some of the forest managers with whom he has worked and environmentalists whom he knows well:

I used to sit in the lunchroom at the forestry office and I had my district ranger ... asking: "What is it that they really want? It's not really about owls is it?" [*the reference here is to the federal listing of Mexican spotted owls as a threatened species*] And I was like, "Yeah it is. It really is about the owls." And he was like, "Is it logging? Is it capitalism? Are they communists? Do they hate America? I mean, what is it that they want?" And I was like, "No it's none of those things. It's the owl." ... They always assume that's it's against them because they just don't understand how anyone could have a value different than theirs (ibid.).

I asked Hoffman, now on the other side of his government position, if his excitement has flagged about the Mexican wolf program. He responded with an emphatic "no," and continued, "I am as excited about it as ever. I've seen wolves right here. The first time I ever heard a wolf

in the wild was up near Hannagan Meadow, out with where the trail crew was camped, and cried. That's what it meant to me to see this happening" (interview, 11 July 2007, near Alpine, AZ).

Dave Parsons, like Hoffman, has moved on from his governmental position to more advocacy-oriented work. After his tenure as the Mexican wolf recovery coordinator for the FWS ended in 1999, Parsons was hired as the carnivore conservation biologist for the Rewilding Institute. Parsons is a polite man, but his professional need to appease ranchers ended when he retired from government duty. Even while he worked for the Service, he lobbied his superiors accordingly. For example, Parsons shared a letter with me that he sent to Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, dated 4 March 1993, entitled "Campfire Communication."³⁸ In the letter, he plainly stated his "philosophy" about the necessity of ungrazed wilderness areas for a successful wolf reintroduction:

I have reached the astute conclusion that **THE BIGGEST IMPEDIMENT TO WOLF RECOVERY IN THE SOUTHWEST IS THE NEARLY UBIQUITOUS PRESENCE OF COWS WITHIN OTHERWISE SUITABLE RECOVERY AREAS.**

Here comes the philosophy. Is it necessary or appropriate to graze the entire Southwest? I don't think so. Can't we designate a few large remote places for more noble purposes, such as preservation of biological diversity and ecosystem integrity? We should. Successful wolf recovery in the Southwest hinges on our ability to designate large blocks of habitat for such purposes.

... While I am fully aware of political realities which led to the retention of grazing on Western wilderness areas, I personally believe livestock grazing in designated wilderness areas is totally inappropriate and ought to be legislated or regulated out of existence. I am not anti-grazing; I support responsible and appropriate grazing on public lands. Short of elimination, livestock grazing in wilderness should be secondary to other more appropriate uses, such as restoration and long-term preservation of biological diversity and ecosystem integrity (which, in some areas, includes wolf reestablishment). In such areas where wolf recovery is determined to be an appropriate objective, wolves should be given primacy over cows and depredation should be an accepted risk if grazing is to persist in these areas.

³⁸ According to Parsons, when Babbitt became Secretary of the Interior, he announced a "campfire communication" program, inspired by a story in which John Muir, Teddy Roosevelt and others were sitting around a campfire and came up with the idea of creating Yellowstone National Park. Babbitt told employees of the FWS that if they had an idea that they wanted him to know about and could condense it to one page, he would guarantee that he would read it (interview with Parsons, 16 July 2007, Albuquerque, NM).

The Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Areas in southwestern New Mexico comprise about 750,000 acres of contiguous wilderness and, possibly (subject to scientific suitability analyses), the most promising site for wolf recovery in the Southwest.³⁹ Unfortunately, this area is politically off limits for wolf recovery, primarily because of opposition by livestock interests. If wolf recovery programs are denied access to the largest wilderness tracts in the Southwest, they are doomed to fail; and the full potential of these areas for preservation of biological diversity and ecosystem functions will remain unmet--all because of cows (4 March 1993, capitalization and boldface type is Parsons'; letter in author's possession).

In this candid letter, Parsons underscored his baseline: biodiversity should trump other land uses – especially in wilderness areas. As he told me in an interview, this was

the primary clash of values. It's not over the wolves. It's over the lifestyle of a subsidized enterprise ... with free predator control service at a discounted rate. ... The [livestock] industry has evolved to the point where that has become an expectation. The government will take care of predator control for them and they can pay a dollar and thirty-five cents to run a cow [and] calf (16 July 2007, Albuquerque, NM).

There are many who have questioned, along with Parsons, whether wolves are truly being “given primacy over cows,” and who agree with him that wolves serve a more “noble” purpose such that “depredation should be an accepted risk” to public-lands grazing.

Like other government biologists I spoke with, Parsons indicated no overt spirituality, but an ecological land ethic played a dominant role in his overall outlook and conservation activism. If Leopold has been a figurehead for environmentalists, his work is still a bible for many game managers and wildlife biologists. While those who work as biologists for state and federal government programs may not mention it in their official documents filed with the Federal Register or available to the public, on a personal level, Leopold resonates.

In the Southwest, the importance of Leopold's scientific contributions are enhanced by his historical residence and work for the Forest Service in New Mexico and Arizona. As noted previously, this is not lost on wilderness advocates, but neither is it lost on the scientists who

³⁹ The Gila and Leopold Wilderness Areas were eventually included in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (as “secondary zones” for dispersal and/or relocation of captured wolves).

have contributed directly to the wolf recovery program. Parsons, for example, entitled an article in the *Wildlife Society Bulletin* “‘Green Fire’ Returns to the Southwest: Reintroduction of the Mexican Wolf” (1998), noting that Leopold’s epiphanic moment involved a Mexican wolf, killed near the location of their reintroduction in the Blue Range. When I asked Parsons if he ever thought about the historical relationship between Mexican wolf reintroduction and Leopold’s work, he responded, “Oh yeah. There was that sense, that sense of having come full circle from the green fire incident through his transformation and understanding the role of predators, actually putting them back in the same place where he helped take them out – very much a sense of that having come full circle and that it might be a new beginning in public acceptance” (interview, 16 July, Albuquerque, NM).

There was a personal connection, too. Parsons noted,

I went to college in the Midwest. Leopold was actually from that area, so he’s influenced me pretty strongly since the 60s. One of his students was on the faculty of Iowa State, who died just before I got there but his influence was still there. I honestly don’t remember the first time I read *Sand County Almanac*, but it totally resonated with me: ecosystem based, wildlife, and wildlands, and at that level rather than a species-based. ... I can get over the loss of individual wolves for the sake of the population or the ecosystem. ... Leopold pretty strongly influenced my thinking, my philosophy, my zeal for conservation advocacy (interview, 16 July 2007, Albuquerque, NM).

Hoffman expressed a similar affinity for Leopold, saying, “I read him early and often and I still do,” and that Leopold probably had as much influence on his thought as any writer. Others I spoke with also had direct connections to Leopold. Dan Groebner, for example, worked closely with Leopold’s first female graduate student, Franz Hammerstrum, and said he was “heavily influenced” by Leopold.

Despite the “zeal” (as Parsons phrased it) Leopold may inspire, government employees have professional responsibilities to the greater public. Parsons’ misgivings about livestock may be shared by some wildlife managers, but the interests of livestock producers remains a necessary

consideration in Mexican wolf recovery areas. For some government employees, the debate over public lands grazing is at best unhelpful and at worst an argument that only further polarizes people who could be meeting in the middle. Speaking to the calls of some environmentalists to remove cattle from public lands, Mexican wolf recovery Field Projects Coordinator John Oakleaf said, “That’s fine if that’s your opinion, but don’t use the wolves for that” (interview, 12 July 2007, Alpine, AZ). Terry Johnson put it even more forcefully:

That’s the greatest mistake the environmental community makes – is not finding a way just to soften the rhetoric, just a little bit. If your issue is getting grazing off public lands, as a *wolf conservationist* I would ask you to get the hell out of the game with that issue. Hunt that dog in some other arena. You’re in the way. I’m not saying you shouldn’t pursue it – I would never say that to anybody. But I’m saying if you have that agenda mixed with wolf conservation, you’re causing us difficulties that we don’t need to deal with. Multiple-use is protected by federal law, it’s protected by state law and policy, and we as conscientious employees of the state wildlife agencies and federal agencies have no choice but to work within that multiple-use context (recording in author’s possession, Colorado Springs, CO, 2 October 2005, “Frontiers of Wolf Recovery” conference).

Putting his own spin on Leopold, Johnson quipped that for people who don’t want to be constructive, “Think like a mountain, and act like a tree: leave” (ibid.).

As these comments indicate, wildlife managers must work within at least two timescales, which are sometimes at odds with one another. One timescale is more immediate and involves the local economic needs and desires of regional communities. The second timescale is longer in duration – indeed, perhaps with no end point at all – and involves the evolutionary capacity of ecosystems to endure and diversify. Understanding that wolves rarely contribute to the former but are integral to the latter, government biologists become mediators of a sort, jostling social duties between humans and the biotic communities of which humans are a part.

Wolves and the Government

From the managerial perspective of federal and state governments, wolves are to be valued for what they can contribute to “the Nation and its people,” but scientifically, they are valued for

what they contribute ecologically and evolutionarily. It is difficult if not impossible to justify the reintroduction of an endangered species without affirming its contributions (or potential contributions) to ecosystem integrity and resiliency. One outcome of this view is that the value of an individual wolf lies more in its genetic “fitness” than in any symbolic attributions of “wildness.” This puts the focus on wolf populations in relation to other game, nongame, and domestic animals. From a managerial perspective, individuals, if necessary, can be sacrificed for the good of the whole.

It is notable that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) publications on gray wolves – such as their two-page “fact sheets,” which are available online to the public – have “adapted” over time to reflect such views: language that could cause offense has been excised, biased modifiers have been deleted, and the scientific and proactive tone has been heightened. For example, in the July 1998 version of the grey wolf fact sheet, the first paragraph contrasted native American attitudes with “settlers” who “*believed* wolves caused widespread livestock losses.” The federal government did not get a free pass either: “*Constantly persecuted and targeted* by large scale predator eradication programs sponsored by the federal government, wolves have been *pursued with more passion and determination than any other animal* in U.S. history.” Wolves, the paragraph concludes, were *finally* protected by the Endangered Species Act in 1973 (FWS 1998b: 1, my emphasis).

This entire first paragraph was excised from the revised March 2006 version of the fact sheet, with one exception; the only sentence retained was the one that noted federal involvement in wolf eradication, which was re-edited to include less inflammatory modifiers: “However, government-sponsored wolf control programs brought the gray wolf to near extinction in the

lower 48 states by the early 20th Century” (FWS 2006a: 1).⁴⁰ Other significant changes are listed in Table 5-2. These documents are a small part of public outreach; they nevertheless represent the succinctly packaged information that most Americans will read, if anything, that is published by the government about wolves. The editorial amendments highlight what a good government document should do to avoid unnecessary conflict: they remove the debate, and affirm the FWS as a proactive organization with a positive tool (the ESA) at its disposal, both of which benefit Americans. However, the changes in the “facts” on the “fact sheets” reveal that moral considerations related to the question of *why* wolves should be recovered were deliberately removed. Especially interesting is the final comment, included in Table 5-2, in which “an opportunity to redress past mistakes” is exchanged for the more authoritative, science-based claim “have restored a top predator to its ecosystem.”

The view of wolves from a wildlife management perspective is significantly different from some wolf advocacy groups that spotlight the beauty and “wildness” of individual animals. Wildlife managers, in contrast, are more likely to focus on species populations rather than on an individual animal. While “controlling” a wolf by capture and/or euthanization is not an action taken lightly, government employees are careful to avoid sentimentality, in part to avoid “anthropomorphizing” (attributing human characteristics to a nonhuman animal) but also to avoid the accusation of taking sides.⁴¹

⁴⁰ The document was revised again in January 2007, primarily updating recent wolf delistings in the western Great Lakes area (Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan) and in the northern Rockies (Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming); deleting sentences that singled out particular groups (“farmers” and “ranchers”); and making population statistics for wolves more current. Current grey wolf fact sheets are available online at: http://www.fws.gov/home/feature/2007/gray_wolf_factsheet.pdf (accessed May 2008).

⁴¹ As one response in the public comment portion of the five-year review put it: “Simply put, wolves are not humans; attributing human values and emotions to them fails to recognize their distinctness as a species and creates a shaky foundation for management” (MW 2005: ARPCC-93, no. 336).

Indeed, professional management of wolf populations is sometimes framed as a practical inevitability. L. David Mech, one of the foremost wolf biologists in the world, explained, “Wolf reintroduction, as distinct from natural recovery, is an especially contentious issue, for it entails dramatic, deliberate action that must be open to public scrutiny, thorough discussion and review, and highly polarized debate. This is as it should be because once a wolf population is reintroduced to an area, it must be managed forever. There is no turning back” (2001: 13).⁴² Mech expressed well, from the perspective of a biologist interested in wolf recovery, a “managerial ethic” in which humans are responsible for regulating wolf numbers indefinitely. If professional scientists do not do it, wildlife managers fear that others will take matters into their own hands. As Groebner summarily stated, “If we don’t manage the wolves, the public will (interview, 13 July 2007, Pinetop, AZ).

This does not mean that controlling wolves is devoid of conflicting personal emotions. A successful recovery of a population may be the final objective, yet removing highly social animals like wolves from a population because of legal provisions can arouse conflicting feelings. Dan Moriarty, a comparative psychologist who studies wolves, stated,

There are a couple of people that work for the animal control division [Wildlife Services] of the USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture], and they’re the guys that are in charge of doing the lethal control, and I know a couple of these guys, and it just pains them when they have to go out there and do something like that. But you have to say, if you don’t then we aren’t going to have a population (interview, 1 June 2007, San Diego, CA).

Moriarty is also on the board of executive directors for the California Wolf Center, a facility that participates in the Mexican Wolf Species Survival Plan.⁴³ Speaking personally, Moriarty said, “I

⁴² Mech has written (1995, 2001) and spoken often about his frustration with “extreme” wolf advocates who oppose wolf control of any kind. Mech’s experiences in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota led him to argue that “To control a wolf population, 30% to 50% of the wolves must be killed by humans each year” (2001: 21).

⁴³ A summary of the Mexican Wolf Species Survival Plan, as well as the facilities that breed captive Mexican wolves, is available online at: http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/cap_manage.shtml (accessed May

feel strongly about animals. I have hard time squishing a bug on the wall,” but, echoing Mech, he argued, “We wouldn’t have any wolves in the U.S. if culling wasn’t part of the package...

Sometimes you just have to make hard decisions” (interview, 1 June 2007, San Diego, CA).

Groebner, who is not directly involved in carrying out wolf control actions, works closely with people who are. He reflected on the difficulties inherent to this job:

The kind of people that apply for these jobs [the on-the-ground work] are the real driven ones, the ones that consider it a personal responsibility to move from across the country to a little town here in ranching country. They’ve got strong personal convictions, and they’re very emotionally involved with it, so if something happens bad on the project it affects them throughout their whole persona, I guess, and people can put up with only so much depressing news and having to kill wolves. I don’t know if I could handle it over there [in Alpine, where most of the Interagency Field Team is stationed], dealing with it day after day. It takes a special person to be told, “You’re wasting your time on a bad project,” and, “Go out and kill a wolf” that you just got done hauling in on your back ten miles to the wilderness. ...It’s a lot of the personal involvement that gets to you after a while, almost like being in war almost, the constant stress and things coming down on you. ...It’s a tough job, it’s gotta be one of the toughest that I’ve ever been associated with (interview, 13 July 2007, Pinetop, AZ).

So, why do wildlife managers do this kind of work? Why do they choose to work directly on Mexican wolf recovery? While wolves may be symbolic of a number of things, for wildlife and wilderness managers, their symbolic power is based on their ability to reflect healthy lands and the complex processes that support them. Hoffman expressed this well:

As soon as I heard there was potential for wolf reintroduction in this area, I was extremely excited. As a wilderness manager or a wilderness advocate – I certainly did both – as a manager, my goal was to restrict our own instincts to manage the land... It’s about me restoring functioning ecosystems [where] the outcomes are determined by natural processes. That is the crux of what wilderness management is about. And restoring a wolf is huge. I mean, a top-level predator, the top-level predator that’s available... I know wolves and people can [co-exist] if they are allowed to do so. It’s just unbelievable to be able to restore that [the larger ecosystem processes that wolves impact] back to the ecosystem. It’s more than symbolic (interview, 11 July 2007, near Alpine, AZ).

2008). As of the summer of 2007, the California Wolf Center had bred three litters of Mexican wolves, and two of the animals from their facility had been introduced into the wild.

As Hoffman indicated here, for wildlife and wilderness managers, wolves have a “more than symbolic” power, because of the tangible impacts that wolves have on the ecosystems of which they are a part.

This takes a long-term vision in a political and economic climate of short-term benchmarks. One comment and response in the five-year review addressed this issue directly, with the commenter asking if the twelve million dollars spent on the program had been worth it. The Recovery Team’s response cited Mexican wolves as a “top carnivore,” which “are known to make significant contributions toward ecosystem health and functionality.” More significantly, however, the comment continued, “It is not possible to assign a monetary value to the role of wolves as top predators in the wild, and whether or not the program is worth a given amount of money is a question of values that must be answered individually” (MW 2005: ARPCC-186, no. 26). Regardless, the Recovery Team was “required under the ESA” to recover wolves, with concurrent “obligations to manage wildlife” on the State and Tribal level.

Groebner spoke to this difference in long- and short-term visions when he pointed out “two big things” related to the differences between wildlife managers and the general public. The first big thing was that the public often focuses on individuals while wildlife managers think in terms of populations. The other big thing, clearly related to the first, was the issue of time frame. As Groebner put it (interestingly, using a personified nature),

Mother Nature is working on a whole different time scale than we are. And we’re trying make Mother Nature fit into our career time scale – we want recovery to occur before I have to retire kind of a thing. That’s the round peg in the square hole. I don’t know how we can impress upon people that things can’t just happen instantly, that these animals evolved and got used to the country over hundreds of years probably. Human expectations of instant gratification [continue to create] conflict (interview, 13 July 2007, Pinetop, AZ).

In other words, wildlife managers are obligated (and desire) to recover Mexican wolves as quickly and efficiently as possible, but the ecological impacts of Mexican wolves may only be

fully evident decades into the future. This creates a tension with those who question the justification for Mexican wolf recovery in “a patchwork quilt of public and private priorities and values” in which “compromises must be made that enable stakeholders favoring each to have meaningful returns on their societal investment” (MW 2005: ARPCC-23, 24).

Future Visions: Keeping Land Manageable and People Reasonable

If it is accurate to say that most biologists who study and work with wolves are informed by an understanding of evolutionary processes that has no final goal, no *telos*, other than generating greater diversity, then it is also true that they are still accountable for deciding how wolf management (as a part of “ecosystem services”) might contribute best to short-term goals of ecosystem function. In other words, what kind of target numbers for wolf populations are scientifically advisable *and* publicly acceptable? Or, stated differently, if ecological science provides one vision of what is desirable for wildlife managers, public opinion may constrain this vision within the parameters of what is practically feasible. As two ecologists argued, wildlife management is “a social process with an ecological core” (Pickett and Rozzi 2001: 274).

According to the FWS, wolf recovery has “the goal of restoring the species to a secure status in the wild as a functioning member of its ecosystem” (2007d: 1). This includes the final goal of delisting a species from endangered or threatened status, at which time a population can be managed without the additional protections mandated by the ESA. When I asked John Oakleaf about the increase in the program’s critics and if such criticisms affected him, he stated simply, “No. I recognize what they’re saying, but our goal is to get a biologically recovered species that’s back there” (interview, 12 July 2007, Alpine, AZ). Oakleaf further indicated that their progress had been substantial, especially in the light of there only being five known Mexican wolves in existence in 1980 (*ibid.*).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service remains the lead agency tasked with implementing the Endangered Species Act, and in Arizona and New Mexico – thus far – wolf recovery has occurred primarily on National and State Forest lands, which offered the most sizable and suitable habitats for wolf recovery in the Southwest. This adds a layer of complexity to the program since public forest lands are guided by a multiple-use philosophy.⁴⁴

When it comes to the public lands in the Southwest, environmental activists, even if sympathetic to multiple-use practices, are oftentimes frustrated that current land uses do not reflect the desire of “we the people” for wolves. Many contend that one special interest group (livestock producers), small in number but politically potent, is consistently shown favoritism by governmental agencies when decisions are made about these lands and their wildlife.⁴⁵ Within the broader purview of environmentalists, this is unacceptable: the lands are “owned” by the American public as a whole and should, they contend, prioritize the public’s desire for wolves.

The difference in objectives between government biologists and wolf advocates about objectives is sometimes stark. For example, when I put the question to John Oakleaf about what he would consider a successful wolf recovery target, he told me “when there’s a huntable population of wolves” (interview, 12 July 2007, Alpine, AZ). In other words, when wolf management is turned over to the state, when they are removed from endangered or threatened status, wolves would become another game species – one predator among others whose numbers are deemed high enough to allow “takes” by citizens with a permit to do so.

⁴⁴ Unlike, for example, Yellowstone National Park, which is closed to livestock ranching within park borders and was founded on the basis of a preservationist philosophy rather than “multiple-use” guidelines. Some differences between wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone (and the greater Northern Rockies) and the Southwest are discussed in chap. 6.

⁴⁵ Political scientist Martin Nie noted that the relationship between livestock associations, government agencies (such as the Bureau of Land Management), and western political representatives (who often serve on natural resource committees) is sometimes characterized as a form of “protective subgovernment,” or with the descriptive metaphor the “iron triangle” (2003: 48).

Differences in future visions about the land also distinguish priorities among ranchers and government biologists. Residents in or near the wolf recovery area sometimes claim that their culture and customs are being undermined by the pressures that wolves bring to bear on local economies. While sensitive to such issues, government biologists are often motivated by a broader vision of landscape health, to which it is presumed wolves will contribute. As Groebner told me, he endorses “a more natural type of control” that wolves would bring to the area, instead of humans controlling wildlife populations. “The ranchers use that phrase [‘culture and custom’] a lot. ... Well, I think we can use that for wildlife, too. Where do we draw that line of what culture and custom do we want to preserve? ... They put it back at the 1900s. I say how about 1850?” (interview, 13 July 2007, Pine Top, AZ). This comment illustrates not only a difference in favored types of “culture” but it also reveals how interpretations of the past inevitably frame variant desires for the future. Integral to these future visions are the values that people attribute to the land and the uses to which it is put.

As I have suggested, while a “managerial ethic” underpins the actions of government biologists, their long-term vision is informed by the scientific narrative of evolution. In a sense, wildlife managers have dual responsibilities; one to “the Nation and its people” and another to aiding the functional capacity of evolutionary processes. The latter responsibility is set within the context of an evolutionary narrative that (similar to the environmentalists with whom I spoke) tends to relativize human importance as a species. “Evolution is a process that is supposed to keep going and we go with it,” as Don Hoffman stated. Perhaps Hoffman, who named Leopold as a major influence on his own philosophy, was channeling Leopold’s thoughts about human beings as “a fellow passenger in the odyssey of evolution” (in Meine 1988: 483).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Elsewhere, in reference to declining grizzly populations, Leopold wrote a similar reflection on appreciation for the evolutionary drama: “Permanent grizzly ranges and permanent wilderness areas are of course two names for one

The drama of the natural world unfolds, and humans, as a species, are bound to the others on this strange trip. Or as Groebner stated, wolf recovery will not happen overnight since “Mother Nature is working on a whole different time scale than we are.”

Wolves, like humans, are a part of this evolutionary process. Both have roles in this larger drama. Shawna Nelson, the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project outreach coordinator, told me, “I’m still in awe and very excited when I see one or hear one [*a wolf*] – I think it’s also very cool, but ... I just think it’s important to keep a proper perspective of what their role is. ... What’s the point of having wolves if you don’t have the environment for them? What’s the point of studying the environment that’s sterile and devoid of other aspects?” (interview, 12 July 2007, Alpine, AZ).

The concerns that wildlife managers and government biologists articulate, as for all the groups I have discussed here, are a mix of personal and public goods. Terry Johnson expressed this well when I asked him about the future of Mexican wolf recovery and what it means to him:

My commitment to this thing has not changed one iota since I started here. If I can die knowing that my grandkids will have the choice to do one thing or another, I’m a happy camper. If I’ve been a part of helping preserve their options ... to go listen for a wolf crying in the wilderness, I’m actually a happy camper. It’s nothing more than that. It’s pretty superficial, I mean, I feel my eyes glistening, but it really hasn’t changed: that commitment to natural diversity for future generations. I have made no effort whatsoever to go out and listen for wolves, look for wolves with one exception: take my family up to Reservation Lake ... and have a little fishing trip. We went back there this past year because there was a pack in the area and I was virtually guaranteed of listening to these wolves. And I am telling you, 2:30 in the morning when that howl woke me up, gawwwd, what a feeling. I don’t need to see them now. Just knowing that they’re out there, knowing my kids will have that option (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ).

In the end, government biologists working on Mexican wolf recovery are managing for a better future. As public servants committed to multiple interest groups, managing for a better future

problem. Enthusiasm about either requires a long view of conservation, and a historical perspective. Only those able to see the pageant of evolution can be expected to value its theater, the wilderness, or its outstanding achievement, the grizzly” ([1949] 1987: 199).

necessarily involves humans as their primary concern. But understanding the role of predators like wolves, and the ecosystems that are influenced by their presence, also influences the way in which they understand social goods. If they can keep the debate minimized, keep people with different opinions reasonable, and advance toward wolf recovery, then perhaps, as Johnson said, they can preserve the options of future generations. This is certainly something that is being worked out on the ground and in the public sphere as around fifty Mexican wolves roam Arizona and New Mexico, and more than three hundred wait in captivity, at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Narrating the Future of Wolf Recovery

Most religions, insofar as I know, are premised squarely on the assumption that man is the end and purpose of creation, and that not only the dead earth, but all creatures thereon, exist solely for his use. The mechanistic or scientific philosophy does not start with this as a premise, but ends with it as a conclusion, and hence may be placed in the same category for the purpose in hand. ...It just occurs to me, however, in answer to the scientists, that God started his show a good many million years before he had any men for audience – a sad waste of both actors and music – and in answer to both, that it is just barely possible that God himself likes to hear birds sing and see flowers grow. But here again we encounter the insufficiency of words as symbols for realities.⁴⁷

Since Leopold's presence still hovers over discussions about wolves in the Southwest, it may be appropriate to note that long before he wrote the "land ethic," he recognized the "insufficiency of words as symbols for realities," and that somehow the wonder he experienced in the wildlands of New Mexico and Arizona could not be captured with a survey map or quantified in board-feet of timber. Despite Leopold's misgivings about other people's assumptions regarding the purpose of "creation," it is difficult, perhaps impossible, not to carry such assumptions. Indeed, such assumptions, as wolf recovery efforts in the Southwest make clear, do not remain latent.

⁴⁷ Excerpted from Leopold ([1923] 1991: 95-96).

The narratives to which people adhere, the stories that they act out, the traditions they preserve, and the future visions they seek to attain are worked out on the ground. This is especially evident in the boundary lines that currently mark the spaces where wolves are (supposed to be) accepted in the Southwest and the spaces that they unknowingly cross, becoming “matter out of place” (Douglas [1966] 2002: 44) when they do.

If a wayward vacationer on her way from Phoenix to Santa Fe took a scenic route and passed through Alpine, Arizona, she might happen into the U.S. Forest Service’s Alpine ranger station office, near the junction of highways 180 and 191. Once inside, this person might notice the topographic maps that detail the contours of the mountains and rocky canyons in the area. Among the maps on display for purchase, one in particular might stand out because of its cover. A Mexican wolf (#511, the so-called “posterwolf” of Mexican wolf reintroduction) is featured on the topographical map for the Blue Range Wilderness and Primitive Area.

If the person was uninterested in spending time in the Blue Range beyond the edge of the highway asphalt, she might not even open up the map. But if she did, for a quick glance, she would see the boundaries of the Blue Range as defined by the U.S. Forest Service. If she unfolded the map and read one of the informational panels on the map’s interior, she might also see that Aldo Leopold’s “green fire” story is quoted, and directly underneath a justification is given for the reintroduction of Mexican gray wolves, “the rarest and most genetically unique subspecies of North American gray wolves,” because, as Leopold wrote, intelligent management required that one should keep every “cog and wheel” of biota.⁴⁸

This would inform our hypothetical tourist of the seeming importance of Mexican wolves to this area. If this person were just passing through and knew nothing about the controversy of

⁴⁸ Quotes are taken from the text on the map. U.S. Forest Service, *Blue Range Wilderness and Primitive Area: Apache National Forest, America’s Great Outdoors* (Arizona and New Mexico, 1998).

Mexican wolf reintroduction, the map might seem to be merely a benign marking of space. The forest ends here; a town begins there; a small private in-holding is marked with a gray rectangle; a campground is marked with a tent icon; a blue stripe, representing a river, meanders between them all. These are just lines.

These seemingly innocuous lines, however, mean a lot to government employees. They have to. For, as the program rules now stand, if a Mexican wolf crosses over the edges of certain boundary lines, its status changes. It may go from “nonessential experimental” to fully endangered; it may go from a protected animal to an animal that must be captured. Even the same actions will be judged differently: if a wolf depredates on cattle on public land within the recovery zone it typically cannot be harmed; if the same wolf depredates on cattle on private land, it can be shot dead.

The perspective on these boundary lines will likewise be very different if one lives in or near the recovery area. Such persons may believe these lines are illegitimate, hemming their communities in at “ground zero,” driving the value of their ranch properties down, committing them to live with animals that were intentionally eradicated only decades ago.

These boundaries may be least meaningful to the ones for whom they were created. The Mexican wolf on the cover of the map, or any other wolf, would not recognize such boundaries. Indeed, since the program’s beginnings, wolves have slipped back and forth over these boundaries, following the contours of earth, up-close, with senses alert and their own sets of cognitive maps.

Whether rancher, environmentalist, or government biologist, values are expressed through the boundaries we seek to create, maintain, and erase. Because ecological and political boundaries are not precisely correlated, wolf eradication and recovery in the Southwest has had a

chronic boundary problem. These boundaries are shifting, contested, laid over the land like a transparency that can be ripped off or re-marked to suit public favor or disfavor. Underneath these lines lies the land itself. I have suggested some of the narratives, ethics, visions, and interests various groups have with regard to Southwestern lands in general and Mexican wolf reintroduction in particular. This provides the necessary background to understand some of the reasons that boundaries for wolf recovery in the Southwest remain so critical, and the arguments about them sometimes so dramatic, for the integrity of people's narratives and their interpretations of history are bound to them.

Table 5-1. Types of mythic narratives, values, ethics, and teleologies.

	Ranchers	Environmental Advocates	Government biologists and wildlife workers
Mythic narrative	Dominion narrative; “natural” hierarchy of creation	Evolutionary holism; Mother Nature’s balance; green fire	Evolutionary narrative; Leopold’s ecology; management
Core values as expressed toward land, humans, nonhumans (domestic/wild predators)			
Land/“Nature”	For humans first; Nature as penultimate	For humans when their interests do not conflict with healthy ecosystems; Nature as ultimate baseline for cultural, spiritual, biological and psychological health	For the public good; Nature as ultimate for evolutionary processes
Humans	Humans are qualitatively distinct as a species; humans as responsible and/or mandated to use and/or care for nature	Humans are one species among many that also have different interests/rights; humans as disruptive force in nature	Humans are one species among many; humans as responsible for governing and managing nature
Nonhumans (domestics)	Needs of domestic animals trump needs of wild animals; domestic animals serve the interests of humans	Needs of wild animals trump the needs of domestic animals; domestic animals can be defiling and/or profane	Rare and/or endangered species are prioritized for the sake of ecosystem integrity and resilience
Nonhumans (predators)	Agents of threat/change, (homewreckers, thieves, varmints)	Agents of biodiversity (icons of the ‘wild’; worthy of respect and care; sacred)	Mediators of ecosystem function (capacity for a system to withstand debilitating change)
Ethical types			
Ethical perspective and practice	Pastoral ethic; strong anthropocentrism; utilitarianism; theocentric stewardship	Environmental ethic (Land Ethic); weak anthropocentrism; environmental stewardship	Utilitarian (greatest good for the greatest number); conservation ethic (Land Ethic); non-theistic stewardship
Hopes, goals, and short and long-term ends to the “story”			
Teleology (future goals)	Maximum yield; community stability; future generations (local)	Ecological harmony; future generations (national/global)	Ecosystem resiliency; future generations (national)

This table divides into types the core values found among the three most influential and important actors in Mexican wolf reintroduction. The typical caveats are operative here: Types can easily become stereotypes; that is, unhelpfully rigid ways to dismiss those that one disagrees with. These types are simple, and people never are. The table below is a starting point for understanding some common features that these groups often share, but individuals are of diverse minds and move betwixt and between such categorical arrangements. What these types do provide are dominant features that one is likely to find among the respective groups that are listed, and they help explain the different positions from which most people articulate their concerns and/or hopes for wolf recovery.

Table 5-2. Comparison of the 1998 and 2006 versions of the gray wolf “fact sheets” published by the FWS. Italics in the 1998 column are mine, and indicate significant phrasings that were amended or deleted in the 2006 version.

1998 version	2006 version
“set of parents”	“breeding pair”
“regulate the balance”	“maintain the balance”
“Biologists do not know all of the reasons why wolves howl”	deleted
“Early settlers moving westward severely depleted most populations of bison, deer, elk and moose... <i>With little alternative</i> , wolves turned to sheep and cattle that had replaced their natural prey.”	“Settlers moving westward depleted most populations of bison deer, elk, and moose... Wolves then turned to sheep and cattle which had replaced their natural prey.”
“The wolf’s comeback <i>has been attributed to</i> a combination of scientific research, conservation and management programs, and education efforts...”	“The wolf’s comeback nationwide is due to its listing under the Endangered Species Act, which resulted in increased scientific research, protection from unregulated killing, reintroduction and management programs, and education efforts...”
<p><i>“Wolf recovery and management are very polarized, controversial, and emotional issues often stemming from people’s attitudes, fears and misunderstandings more than wolves themselves. Attitudes are often based on inaccurate information, making wolf management perhaps more difficult than any other wildlife management program. For example, some people continue to carry the unfounded fear that wolves attack people or threaten outdoor activities. In fact, wolves generally avoid humans. While wolves certainly have the ability to kill people, there has never been a verified report of a healthy wild wolf deliberately attacking or seriously injuring a human in North America. Wolves can be very tolerant of human activity if they are not deliberately persecuted so there is rarely a reason to restrict human activity, including logging and mining, simply because wolves live in the area.”</i></p>	<p>“Many people oppose wolf recovery because of concerns for human safety. However, wolf attacks on humans are extremely rare in North America, even in Canada and Alaska where there are consistently large wolf populations. Most documented attacks have been in areas where wolves habituated to people when the animals were hand-fed or attracted to garbage.”</p>
“Wolf recovery efforts <i>represent an opportunity to redress past mistakes</i> and enhance our understanding not only of wolves themselves, but also the complex interactions among species in their natural environments.”	“Wolf recovery efforts have restored a top predator to its ecosystem, and improved our understanding of the complex interactions among species in their natural environments.”

CHAPTER 6
INSCRIBING VALUES ON THE LAND: “PROBLEM WOLVES,” HOMELAND SECURITY,
AND MARGINAL THOUGHTS

May we all never be judged by anything so harshly or hold to as strict a life or unremitting of borders as the ones we try to place on and around wolves.

Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins.¹

In the spring of 2008 construction was completed for three “wolf-proof” bus stop shelters in the Reserve School District of New Mexico. The need for these wood frame and wire-mesh enclosures was explained as a regrettable necessity to protect children “from both the weather and from local wildlife” because of incidents involving habituated wolves in the area, including one in which two children were “followed home” by a Mexican wolf.²

Arguably, the greater need was a symbolic one. School superintendent Loren Cushman was reported saying, “We put children before animals” (Vallez 2007). One rancher with whom I spoke saw it as further evidence that the Mexican wolf program was making rural people, especially children, suffer for the sake of some far-away, environmentally based whim. She asked me a handful of pointed rhetorical questions, including the following: “Why are we having to jail our children for protection against something that was wiped out? The introduction was for people who want to hear the wolf howl, but how many people are going to be where the wolf howls?” (interview, Daisy Mae Cannon, 7 June 2007, near York, AZ).

Others viewed these bus-stop proposals as the latest publicity ploy to undermine wolf recovery: make the recovery about threats to children and public sympathy follows. Jean Ossorio, like many wolf advocates, was appalled that Catron County residents acted as though

¹ The epigraphs for this chapter are from Bass (1992: ix), and Douglas ([1966] 2002: 150), respectively.

² See the article “3 Wolf-Proof Bus Stop Shelters Go Up In New Mexico Community,” online at: www.wolfcrossing.org (accessed May 2008). According to a 5 December 2007 report from Albuquerque’s KRQE Channel 13 News, the school district was calling for twenty such “shelters.” Online: <http://www.krqe.com/Global/SearchResults.asp?vendor=wss&qu=%22glenwood+and+reserve+are+scared%22> (accessed May 2008).

there was a wolf on every rural road. She regularly led backcountry wolf-tracking trips and, by 2007, had seen only twenty wolves, with the closest sighting at 120 meters. She remarked, “You don’t see these guys [wolves] very much, despite what you will hear from the other side. I was kidding the other day – I said, ‘The next time we go camping out there we just need to camp by a Catron County school bus stop, and then we’ll be guaranteed to see wolves’” (interview, 5 June 2007, Las Cruces, NM).

Whether a deft political maneuver or the expression of a legitimate concern about the threat posed by habituated wolves, these bus stops were one boundary-marking effort in a long line of historical proposals to regulate the distance between wolves and humans.

Indeed, fence-building suggestions to keep wolves in their proper place are almost an American institution, improbable or impractical as such suggestions might be. In 1717, for example, several towns in Cape Cod debated the merits of building a “high fence of palisades or of boards” that they reasoned would prevent wolves from crossing the five-mile neck of land that linked their county with the mainland. The plan floundered due to lack of agreement over funding and the resistance of towns that would be left to contend with wolves on the other side of the proposed fence (in McIntyre 1995: 40). In the Southwest, a “wolf proof” fence was proposed in 1921 by residents of Hidalgo County, New Mexico, to keep Mexican wolves in Mexico, though this proposal also lost its momentum (Brown [1983] 2002: 65-66). Similar suggestions cropped up a few times in the years to follow, something Brown noted as odd “given the digging ability of the wolf” ([1983] 2002: 88).³

Even in the twenty-first century, the idea of using a fence to contain wolves occasionally surfaced as a “solution” to various problems with the Mexican wolf program. Surprisingly

³ One as late as the mid-1940s from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service district supervisor L.H. Laney, who called for an “International boundary fence of the wolf-repellent type” ([1946] 1995: 185).

perhaps, given that the suggestion came from a state government agency, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture offered the following written comment on the five-year review of the program: “NMDA suggests a total overhaul if the program is to continue, beginning with a request to Congress for proper funding levels. This funding should include fencing of a sanctuary large enough to support the contemplated recovery population” (MW 2005: ARPCC-6, no. 14; see also, MW 2005: ARPCC-171, no. 2). Another comment indicated that some kind of enclosure would be a tourist boon if coupled with proper lodging facilities: “My suggestion for the Mexican wolf program is to take six sections of the National Forest southeast of Reserve NM and fence it 9 feet high with chain link and lay 2 foot wire on the inside ground so wolves can’t dig out and put the wolves in this area which should be adequate space for them to roam and breed” (MW 2005: ARPCC-24, no. 79). The responses to such comments by the Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC) have been consistent:

Recovery of a listed species under the ESA generally connotes healthy populations of wild, naturally-interacting and dispersing, free-ranging animals that are no longer in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range. Furthermore, the average home range size of Mexican wolf packs is $182 \pm 24 \text{ mi}^2$ (see Technical Component). Consequently, artificial containment of Mexican wolves to a fenced ranch, no matter how large, is not feasible and would not meet the legal standard of recovery of the species under the ESA. For example, wolves maintained at pre-release facilities such as Sevilleta and Ladder Ranch do not count toward recovery while in captivity (MW 2005: ARPCC-171, no. 2, my emphasis).

But really, such suggestions had little to do with how effective these fences might have been. Rather, this brief list of fence-building recommendations expresses the range of boundaries people may erect – or deem necessary – to gain a sense of control over their communities and their lives.

Physical borders – such as roads or walled sections of the US-Mexico border – can indeed be potent obstacles for wildlife, but for Mexican gray wolf recovery it is the boundaries that are deeply inscribed in human consciousness that are most critical. Wolves continue to frequent the

edges of how many Americans define themselves in relation to the natural world. Public values have shifted enough to allow for the redrawing of political boundaries; yet these values have changed unevenly, with geographical location and social identity as the best indicators of pro- and anti-reintroduction sentiments. This chapter explores the interplay between these realms of imagination and landscape, focusing particularly on the most critical border issues in the context of Mexican wolf reintroduction.

Wolf Transgressions

Many of the conflicts involving wolves and humans in North America are the result of wolves' refusal to stay put in the spaces to which humans would confine them. This was true historically when wolves and European colonists first came into conflict, and it remains true, as is evident in the intense discussions over what boundaries are appropriate for reintroduced wolves in the Southwest. Wolves have not only been active in the imagination, particularly in the way people think about themselves in relation to the "wild," but they have also been active in the physical landscape. In both the imagination and in the physical world, they cross boundaries that humans erect and attempt to control.

Perhaps the attention given to wolves as a species has been accentuated all the more because of their domesticated cousins, *Canis lupus familiaris*, "man's best friend," the bringer of slippers and the living burglar alarm. I spoke to wolf advocates for whom their dogs or wolf-dog hybrids were a gateway of interest into wolf recovery issues, such as Bobbie Holaday.⁴

However, dogs may also function as symbolic representatives of the proper role of canines – that

⁴ In our talk, Holaday mentioned this (12 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ) and also noted it in her book (Holaday 2003: 4-6). Others have expressed similar feelings of personal connection that led them into broader issues related to wolves, such as Catherine Feher-Elston, who credits her relationship with a wolf named Mowgli – after Rudyard Kipling's boy protagonist in *The Jungle Book* – for helping her recover from an illness and inspiring her to further research and advocacy work on behalf of wolves. Her book, *Wolfsong*, is dedicated to Mowgli, whom she calls "a mentor" and "ambassador" (2004: x, 187).

is, obedient to the will of humans, and an extension of human affection or utility. In such a case, wolves may be considered an “uncontrolled” or “wild” force and cast in contrast to their domesticated counterparts (see Shepard 1996b: 141-52, 243-250, 267; see also, Burghardt and Herzog 1989: 139-48; Kellert 1989: 20-23).

Inasmuch as it defies the domesticating hands of humans, wolf behavior may thus be interpreted as an affront to human control. And yet, wolves’ sociality, like other animals that humans have domesticated, may be one of the reasons that wolf recovery efforts continue to receive such a great deal of attention. As one report noted, “Wolves are discussed in terms of human characteristics, in a manner unlike any other wild creature. ...[W]e have yet to locate publicly distributed wolf research reports that do not in some way point out the similarities between wolf society and human society” (Hardy-Short and Short 2000: 71). In part because of this strong association, wolves have become an ideal-type of animal “other,” a mirror through which many people have reflected upon their own animality. Whether this animality is viewed as something to shun or embrace, the value of wolves is irrevocably caught up within their historically ambiguous status in relation to humans.

Further contributing to this ambiguous status are the geographical associations that go hand-in-hand with how wolves have been symbolically categorized. Where animal species are located – and where it is assumed that these species should be located – contributes to their symbolic potency. As Kimberley Patton observed, “The ecological situatedness of the animal is an invariable part of its symbolism,” and symbolic and mythic attributions are contextually related to observations based on animals’ agency within their habitats (Patton 2006a: 33). For wolves, this has meant that wolves/wilderness/wild (and sometimes savage/bestial) have been repeatedly linked throughout history.

The key difference is that now, for many people, a “wilderness” with wolves is a positive reclamation of ecological and symbolic space. Indeed, some have claimed that wolves are a “barometer” of wilderness and wildness (Paquet, in Busch 1998: 15); or that they “exemplify the wilderness experience” (Udall 2005: ix); or, as Bobbie Holaday told me, “In order to have the real essence, the real spirit, the keystone of wilderness, you had to have the wolf back there” (interview, 12 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ). More poetically, Rob Edward, the director of carnivore recovery for the wildlife advocacy group WildEarth Guardians, stated, “For me, **the word ‘wolf’ evokes another word: ‘wild.’** It is the presence of wolves on the landscape that ultimately determines how wild that landscape is. Without that wild heart, the land spirals into ever more degraded forms. Indeed, without that wild heart, much of the American West is a withered husk (WildEarth Guardians email, 21 May 2008, Edward’s emphasis).

However, symbolic associations, both pro and con, are not necessarily based on the places wolves could live, given the opportunity. Perhaps surprising to many for whom the wolf is a wilderness icon, wolf biologists agree that wolves, among the most highly adaptive of large mammals, do not need wilderness areas to survive. As habitat generalists and opportunistic feeders, wolf territories are based mostly on the availability of food in relation to other wolf packs. In the United States, wilderness came to be associated with wolves because historically wolves were driven to places less inhabited by humans. The Southwest fit this historical pattern, with Mexican wolves finding refuge only in those areas that were less populated by humans, until northern Mexico became their last wilderness harbor. However, in other parts of the world (and increasingly in the contiguous United States, in areas of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan), wolves thrive close to human settlement, so long as human-caused mortality is relatively low and their prey base remains sufficient (Mech 1995: 272-73; Linnell *et al.* 2001;

Fritts *et al.* 2003: 300-301; Boitani 2003: 324-327, 335, 340; Brown [1992] 2005: 140-142; Pluskowski 2005).

Unlike human-designated wilderness areas or National Parks and Forests, the boundaries of which are defined by political fiat, wolves do not remain in one area. This mobility and adaptability has been problematic in places where wolves transgress human ideas of where wolves should be located, for wolves, if they have the opportunity to do so, will disperse to new territories, disregarding the lines that humans have carefully drawn in their minds and on their maps.

Signaling Territory: Wolves

Just as humans are constrained by organic-cultural processes and limits (e.g., our bodies, though porous, are bounded; our senses are limited to those of bipedal primate, however cognitively developed; our notions of community are contextually shaped by inherited cultural traditions), wolves are constrained by their own species-specific senses and modes of communication.⁵ In short, wolves have different ways of signaling territory than humans do. As ethologists have noted, behavioral patterns can be observed among wolves that indicate how they communicate with one another individually and between pack groupings. Many of these behavioral patterns are oriented around the establishment of boundaries – social hierarchy among individuals, or territorial hunting ranges between packs, for example.⁶

⁵ I am drawing the hyphenated term “organic-cultural” from Tweed (2006: 62-67), who uses this term to illustrate how religion is both individually (biologically) and collectively (culturally) dependent. Humans are limited by such constraints but not determined by them, according to Tweed (2006: 66), and the hyphen in the phrase indicates that “neural physiological, emotional, and cognitive” processes should not be separated from “linguistic, tropic, ritual and material” concerns (2006: 65). Midgley, whose work I note below, highlighted a similar nature-culture interaction throughout her book *Beast and Man* ([1978] 1995), which I have found profitable in terms of underscoring the relationship between human imagination and geography.

⁶ For “cognitive mapping” through olfactory signals, which enables wolves not only to mark the bounds of territories but to navigate efficiently, see Peters (1978); and Peters and Mech (1978).

Wolves use species-specific methods to establish and reinforce such social boundaries, relying on highly developed olfactory senses, vocalizations, and body postures that provide a diverse range of signals. In their own social contexts, wolves are effective communicators, and according to wolf biologists and ethologists much of the seeming aggression of wolves' body postures is to prevent conflict or its escalation (see Packard 2003; Harrington and Asa 2003). The behaviors that have made wolves among the most adaptive mammals for millennia, however, are necessarily interpreted in widely different ways by humans.⁷ In the United States, for much of the last five hundred years, wolf behavior – their vocalizations, their territorial dispersions and movements, their predatory diet – was interpreted as a challenge to human dominance.

Consider, for example, the interpretation of wolf howls and their association with wilderness. According to wolf biologists, wolves howl to communicate a variety of signals to one another but a primary reason for howling is to establish territory without expending unnecessary energy fighting for it.⁸ Of course, humans hear with their own ears, not with wolf ears, and have frequently interpreted these howls as being directed toward them.⁹

Descriptions of wolf howls reveal a great deal about human conceptions of wolves and provide access into the imaginative associations that have been projected upon wolves. A

⁷ The following is one instructive example of how wolf avoidance and fear was interpreted as an affirmation of human dominion. During the late 1800s, “wolfers” laced bison carcasses with strychnine in order to kill wolves and collect their pelts for money. On the plains of Kansas, in the midst of wolves tempted by dead bison, W.E. Webb reflected, “Man never appreciates the wonderful command that God gave him over the other animals until away from his fellows, and surrounded by the wild beasts of the solitudes, in all their native fierceness. Here were a few mortals of us encompassed by wolves, in sufficient numbers and power to annihilate our party, and yet one solitary man walking toward them would have put the whole brute multitude in flight” (Webb [1872] 1995: 55).

⁸ See Harrington and Mech (1978) and Harrington and Asa (2003) for behavioral analyses of wolf vocalizations, including barks, whimpers, growls, and howls. Theberge (1975) also provides an interesting first-hand account by a scientist about howls as a means of territorial marking to prevent conflict.

⁹ For an interpretation of early American folk stories' uses of howls as a dramatic device, see Coleman (2004: 110-114).

remarkable amount has been written about the howls of wolves in the United States – to review just a few examples from previous chapters: the description of untamed lands as a “howling wilderness” in colonial times (and beyond); “wolf songs” among certain Native societies; the aural reminder (interpreted as a taunt) that “civilization” had not yet triumphed in the West; positive associations of wolf howls as the “deep, chesty bawl” of wilderness; the primal sense of human animality; and the more contemporary spiritual meanings attributed to wolf howls that equate these vocalizations with the “spirit” of healthy land and human tolerance for the autonomy of wildlife.

The interpretations continue. For rural ranchers who live in wolf-occupied territory, howls in their “backyards” are less than desirable. When I asked rancher Jack Diamond if he had ever heard a wolf howl, he told me he had not but that his wife had. She happened to be in the room, and after noting that howls were scary because they may represent an end to hunting and ranching in the area, he followed up on this comment with the following observation: “And that’s funny, because I’m sure you can ask somebody else, and they’ll tell you that’s the greatest thing you ever heard. . . .I guess it just depends upon what side you’re on. And, she’s right, when I hear one, it’s not like I’m going to get a big thrill about hearing one” (interview, 15 July 2007, Beaverhead Ranch, Catron County, NM). Another rancher simply did not see what all the fuss was about one way or the other; a howl was a howl, and his dogs howled “every time the goddang railroad” passed by the ranch (Joe Cannon, interview, 7 June 2007, near York, AZ).

Speaking with wolf advocates, one would think that a completely different animal was being described. Of course, in some ways, this is accurate: what wolves represent for such persons is a totally different set of concerns. For example, Matt Clark, a southwestern representative for Defenders of Wildlife, described hearing Mexican wolves howl in the wild as

“probably one of the most powerful experiences of my life” (interview, 8 June 2007, Tucson, AZ). About eight to ten months after the initial release of Mexican wolves, when he was on a ten-day backpacking trip in the Gila Wilderness area, he heard wolves howl in the same canyon where he was camped. He stated,

I’ve never had that sort of sensation. It was like goosebumps times ten and then goosebumps in your heart. All of the sudden my whole body and mind and spirit were awake. It was just a beautiful song that they sang. All that they describe about wolves howls is true. A very inspiring sound but also a cry of help to the world, [and this help] is sometimes there and other times not there (ibid.).

But it is not just persons within advocacy organizations that may be inspired, or who may feel that a howl signifies something that transcends communication with other wolves. Even government biologists can be captivated. Terry Johnson described the wolf howls he heard while camped out with his family as “a moment of magic” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ). Despite thinking he was prepared for such a sound, Johnson said, it was

just like this bolt of lightning goes up and down your spine, and I’m sure what little hair I have left on the back of my head was up, and I’m just thinking: my God, that’s more magnificent than any description I’ve ever read, that’s better than David Mech has described it when I talked to him about it. It was a feeling of not just [personal] joy of being in the wild, but knowing, hey, you know, in some part, you are part of the reason that that wolf is out there, and it was satisfying beyond belief (ibid.).

Johnson felt that this moment was equal even to the initial release of Mexican wolves because the wolf he heard was presumed to be a third-generation wild wolf. Thus, this wolf, unlike “the ones in cages,” signaled hope for the future and “a satisfaction that that dream of 1998 is reality right now” (ibid.).

Besides howling, wolves have many other ways in which they define and maintain boundaries amongst themselves, from body postures that display dominance and submission to controlled urination (“aromatic advertisements,” as one writer put it [Grambo 2005: 51]) that do double duty in establishing status and territory. All in all, wolves’ bodies are “complex signaling

devices” (Coleman 2004: 25) that mark social and geographic space in ways that are readily interpreted by other wolves.

These boundaries are typically less perceptible to humans. At times, it is a matter of a lack of sensory equipment. Wolves’ olfactory capacities are up to millions of times more receptive than humans (Harrington and Asa 2003: 88-89), and therefore humans miss a lot of communication that goes on within this sensorial realm. At other times, it is more a matter of humans not paying attention, or not having to pay attention, or paying attention in the manner to which we have been conditioned.

It became far easier to ignore wolves’ territorial signals as humans acquired the ability to overcome the environmental constraints that once hedged their own territorial claims. In reference to the ecological tenacity of wolves, ethologist Michael Fox noted, “Hunters in the Northern Hemisphere were obliged to live with the wolf, to cohabit, and to share the same prey” (1978: 26). For much of the history of European settlement in the United States, this was also the case; colonists may not have been enchanted by wolves but they had to accept the inevitability of their presence – if not in immediate proximity, then at least within howling distance. This changed dramatically through technological advances, which allowed the “reach” of Americans to extend far beyond their immediate territorial claims of home and hearth. Chemical technologies were particularly decisive, outstripping wolves’ abilities to elude humans.¹⁰ Growing populations of people were no longer “obliged” to share the same spaces, or

¹⁰ In the case of Mexican wolves, though any viable population of wolves was eliminated from the Southwest by the mid-1920s, wolves continued to slip into the United States from Mexico – a phenomenon referred to as an “invasion” that required “border control” (see Brown [1983] 2002: 25, 59-115). Managing this international border became easier with greater attention to surveillance by U.S. government employees, and especially with the use of Compound 1080, a manufactured poison that was specially modified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Tellingly, the program included a partnership with the Pan American Sanitary Bureau in order to train ranchers and veterinarians how to use 1080 effectively, with the justification that rabies posed a threat to cattle and wildlife (Ames [1982] 2005: 114). Sanitizing the land, in a manner of speaking, meant purifying it of the “disease” of wolves. By the 1950s, the already few remaining Mexican wolf transgressors were virtually eliminated.

even ones that were not in immediate proximity. In short, wolves as a type of environmental constraint or limitation on human mobility (or, on a psychological level, the desire to venture too far from home) was eliminated.

In the United States, it is currently the case that humans broadly define and determine where wolves are allowed to move. In the Southwest, wolf movements continue to be bound by human intervention and management, and are likely to be for the foreseeable future. Wolves may lodge bodily “protests” against the boundaries imposed on them, as did two Mexican wolves when one traveled as far as Flagstaff, Arizona, and the other to the New Mexico-Mexico border and back (MW 2005: TC-20). These wolves are the current dispersal record-holders among Mexican gray wolves, who have few reasons to venture long distances because their numbers in the wild have remained low. Gray wolves, more generally, have been documented dispersing more than five hundred miles from their pack territories (Mech and Boitani 2003: 11-17, esp. p.14), and if Mexican wolf numbers expand, more long-distance dispersals are likely. As Jeff Williamson, the director of the Phoenix Zoo, put it, wolves “have the tendency to define their role in the ecosystem without our blessing” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ).

Wolf reintroductions have changed the playing field, so to speak – where the lines get drawn and the criteria of ecological success – but such reintroductions have not changed ideologies of dominance, which run more deeply under the surface of those lines. By ordering the world, humans endow it with meaning, but there are a number of ways to order the world and a number of ways to see ourselves as ordered within it.

Signaling Territory: Humans

Humans, of course, have their own species-specific means of marking territory and creating a sense of group cohesion. One of the reasons that I dwelt on the notion of narrative in the last chapter was to illustrate that the way different groups of people structure the world and

negotiate their way through these worlds has to do with the kinds of value-based stories that are told in reference to other animals. As story-tellers and story-bearers, humans' identities are formed through cultural assumptions that are enacted and negotiated on the land.

Biologically speaking, humans – like many other animals – are born with innate tendencies and learn, develop, and elaborate upon these skills over time. An example commonly used to illustrate this is language: humans have the capacity for speech (all the biological equipment) but must learn (at least one) language to communicate effectively. Mary Midgley's discussion of "open instincts" among what she referred to as higher animals is a helpful way of thinking about this. On a continuum, one can consider closed instincts stereotyped behaviors that do not need to be taught; open instincts, on the other hand, are those behaviors that are subject to adaptation, creative selection, and further refinement.

The cognitive capacity for symbolic thought gives humans a wide range of adaptive possibilities, manifest in the diverse cultures that have been created to meet the constraints of various environments. Humans, Midgley memorably argued, come into the world "half-finished," with biological tendencies and imperatives that are complemented and actualized by culture and morality ([1978] 1995: 286).¹¹ Indeed, humans may have a greater need for cultural mores because our behaviors are so flexible. In Midgley's words, our aggressive tendencies, in comparison to other animals, are "subject to a lot of laws, and rather more, not less adaptable

¹¹ In other words, humans are not totally plastic, "blank paper" to be written on by the hand of culture. But, as Midgley noted, neither are humans totally determined by their genetic codes, bound by these microscopic imperatives. Typical of her playful metaphors to describe complex thoughts, she stated: "Man is innately programmed in such a way that he needs a culture to complete him. Culture is not an alternative or a replacement for instinct, but its outgrowth and supplement. Man is like one of those versatile cake mixes that can be variously prepared to end up as different kinds of cake – but never, it must be noted, as a boiled egg or smoked salmon. From a cake mix you can only get some sort of cake, and from a human baby you can only get an adult with some selection from the emotional repertoire of his own species. But just as a cake has to be baked, so a baby has to be exposed to a specific, already existing culture. He cannot generate it on his own. And even if he is going to reject it later, he has to absorb it fully first" ([1978] 1995: 286).

than others [animals], because where they grew horns and prickles, we grew an intelligence, which is quite an effective adaptive mechanism” ([1978] 1995: 48). Midgley’s point was that humans, like other social animals, are capable of great affection (which facilitates intragroup bonding) but this also enables acts of protective and/or aggressive behavior. Our notions of community, the borders of our social territories, if you will, are mapped and reinforced by our cultural values and narratives.

Understanding ourselves as part of a community is thus a biological tendency that is reinforced and given symbolic content by our cultural narratives. This is why our stories are such an important means of marking territory. We tend to gravitate toward those – ideologically, if not physically as well – who tell stories that make sense to us, and much of this has to do with trusting those who are telling the stories. This is particularly important for how we might treat nonhuman species as within or separate from our communities. Sometimes this is as simple as mapping our worlds with a dualistic framework of “us” and “them.” Such binaries are consistently invoked in the controversies about wolves, and, as social environmental policy scientists Tim Clark and Murray Rutherford noted, these binary conceptions are not limited to any particular geography: “The notion of ‘we and they’ is the central theme that holds groups and societies together by creating individual and group meaning. Our core identities are formed around such groups, regardless of whether we tend to be parochial or cosmopolitan in our worldviews. This dynamic is clearly evident in large carnivore management” (Clark and Rutherford 2005: 8; see also Wilmot and Clark 2005: 153-56).¹²

¹² At least one study (Naughton-Treves *et al.* 2003) clearly showed that “deep-rooted social identity” and professional occupation were the most influential factors in determining levels of tolerance toward wolves; much more important, it should be noted, than compensation payments that were intended to influence such tolerance levels.

Since I have already discussed various understandings of wolves as “insiders” and “outsiders” I will not belabor such historical examples. What I do want to further highlight are the particularities of how such notions play out in the context of wolf reintroduction and recovery efforts. Because of their “otherness,” wolves oftentimes reveal the margins of our stories, highlighting when and in what situations the imagined lines that define a sense of social space are violated.

Religion, inasmuch as it creates a sense of communal identity, may be a primary means of working out such social classifications. A sense of self, community, and place are informed by social ideals, which are in turn informed by religious values.¹³ Some of the people whom I interviewed understood well how religion reaches beyond the bounds of institutional affiliation and frames divergent valuations of wolves. For example, after she told me about her own religious convictions, I asked Bobbie Holaday if she found the same sorts of deeply held religious values among people who did not want to see wolves reintroduced. She remarked:

I hadn't heard them [ranchers] mention a religious point of view or bringing God into it, as much, [than] just the fact that they had a deep-seated hatred of wolves, like a religion, embedded in their very being, and probably always will, which is almost like a part of their religion. I mean, if you're a religious person, nobody is going to drive that out of you. And I think their belief that wolves are evil and lustful and should be destroyed from the face of the earth is a part of their belief, and they truly believe that. ...They sincerely believe what they're doing is right, too, and that's what I think we have to respect, whether we agree with their context or not. We have to recognize that's what they believe, and it's just like other religions: we have to respect them [other religions]... (interview, 12 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ).

When Holaday said that such beliefs were “like a religion” she was pointing toward a distinctive social divide between wolf advocates and those who are against wolf reintroduction. Human interpretations of wolves (or any animal for that matter) are embedded in nested sets of

¹³ Again, I am not writing here of religion as synonymous with any particular institutional structure, but of religion as means of negotiation and orientation within the world in a manner that defines and enacts social identity, place, and meaning (see chap. 1 and 5).

assumptions; as Clark and Rutherford stated, “The different beliefs that people hold about large carnivores are tied closely to their basic beliefs about themselves, about appropriate relationships with nature, about the value and rights of individuals, and about how decisions should be made within their communities and the nation” (2005: 12). Moreover, these “basic beliefs” are constructed and enacted through the symbols, rituals, and narratives that inform social membership.

Wolves, some people will grant, are part of a wild, biotic community, but wolves too frequently cross that elusive boundary between wild and tame, unfamiliar and familiar, and between wilderness and civilization. When wolves do cross those lines, they often are labeled in ways that suggest they are – to borrow a phrase that anthropologist Mary Douglas used to compare notions of social pollution – “matter out of place.”¹⁴ Wolves, in other words, become a contagion of sorts, violating the constructions of the world – both ideological and geographical – that humans seek to maintain.

One striking feature about the notion of “pollution” is its relation to the reduction of ambiguity. Drawing from her anthropological fieldwork, Douglas noted that if violations tend to be self-punishing or have immediate social consequences, invocations of pollution were largely unnecessary. It is when there are not immediate punishments (or the necessary authority to make them compulsory) that cultural notions of pollution are given greater emphasis and elaboration as a means of enforcing moral norms. If behaviors that may rupture social order and continuity

¹⁴ Douglas attributed this phrase to Lord Chesterfield, who used it to define what various cultures considered “dirty” or dirt-like (Douglas 1984: 50; see also, Douglas [1966] 2002: 44, 203). Douglas summarized this expansive notion of dirt as follows: “For us dirt is a kind of compendium category for all events which blur, smudge, contradict, or otherwise confuse accepted classifications. The underlying feeling is that a system of values which is habitually expressed in a given arrangement of things has been violated” (1984: 51).

have no corresponding punitive enforcement, a “higher” authority (a collective social ideal, a developed legal system, God, etc.) can be called upon to justify their prohibition.¹⁵

This is why margins attract such a good deal of pollution-related rhetoric, for this is where community ideals are most threatened. The margins are those boundaries most frequently deemed unsafe and threatening to notions of good order, the zones in which categorical violations most frequently occur. While other theorists have noted this phenomenon particularly in relation to rites of transition¹⁶ – those ambiguous passages from one social role to another – Douglas expanded this notion of dangerous margins yet further in her comparative analysis *Purity and Danger* ([1966] 2002), noting that pollution taboos and rituals (“symbolic patterns [that] are worked out and publicly displayed”) are a significant means of accessing and analyzing a culture’s sense of social and cosmological order.

In her work, Douglas dealt primarily with food regulations and sexual taboos, but her insights can be productively applied to the bounded spaces in which wolves are now confined and the margins which they frequent.¹⁷ “Ordering” wolves is one way in which people can order their environments according to social ideals, systematizing them, as it were, to conform to the

¹⁵ Douglas summarized this well in the following statement: “[W]hen the sense of outrage is adequately equipped with practical sanctions in the social order, pollution is not likely to arise. Where, humanly speaking, the outrage is likely to go unpunished, pollution beliefs tend to be called in to supplement the lack of other sanctions” ([1966] 2002: 164).

¹⁶ Douglas was highly influenced by Durkheim’s socially based examination of both secular and religious ideals, but it is Van Gennep’s notion of society as a metaphorical house and his analysis of rites of passage from one “room” to another that she utilized in understanding social efforts to contain polluting agents (1984: 55-56; [1966] 2002: 119, 141).

¹⁷ Part of Douglas’s project, it should be noted, was to contravene anthropological characterizations of “primitive” cultures as suffering from some form of cognitive deficiency (“irrational,” “pre-logical,” “magical,” etc.), thereby setting them comfortably apart from modern, Western cultures and/or “world” religions ([1966] 2002: xii, xvii, 16-35). This she does admirably, but in my view, she was only partly successful in breaking down such pejorative barriers, since she recapitulated a distinctive boundary between “primitive” cultures and modern ones – not on the ability to reason but on a purported difference between “our” social worlds (which are differentiated) and “primitive” cosmic worlds (which are undifferentiated) ([1966] 2002: 91ff). Douglas argued that the “progress” of social specialization “freed” moderns for greater self-awareness and a more direct relation to the environment (98, 114-15), a debatable claim.

values and visions they hold of the natural world (and the proper place of animals within it). Human “pollution behavior,” as Douglas called it, “is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications” ([1966] 2002: 45), and therefore labeling some items as dangerous provides coherence and structure to an overarching worldview. On the one hand, understandings of wolves as a metaphorical disease also express a social disease with their presence. On the other hand, wolves, when understood as representatives of the sacred “spirit” of wilderness, can offer an ultimate horizon of purifying redemption, a way to symbolically cleanse humanity of its past transgressions against wildlife. The polluting agent (the violation of social order), in this case, would be killing wolves unnecessarily.

Because the dominant view in the United States has been that wolves are animals that should be separated from human communities (including the domestic animals and lands claimed by those communities), “wilderness” – as a space of “uncultivated” lands and as an oppositional term for “civilization” – became a defining landscape for wolves. The “otherness” of both wolves and “wilderness” was therefore an association that was reinforced by Americans’ sense of territoriality, to the point that wolves served as a synecdoche for wilderness. In the midst of the humans who are staking their claims to these lands, wolves are simultaneously challenging such territorial constructions with their movements.

Depending on where they are, who they bother, and what they eat, Mexican wolves can commit any number of spatial “transgressions” in the Southwest. I would like to offer two examples in particular that underscore why Mexican wolves’ numbers remain marginal, and I would also like to suggest it is because they unknowingly frequent the margins of spaces assigned to keep them properly contained (which is a matter of a mismatch between human “orders” and ecological constraints). The first example of boundary transgression is regional in

scope and managerial in quality, for it involves the zones in which wolves are currently allowed in the Southwest, and how wolves are labeled “problem animals” when they transgress such zones. The second example is local in scale, and relies on an assertion of social identity in the face of “outside” forces that threaten to disrupt a shared sense of place and community. The common theme uniting these examples is that human geographic boundaries are a tangible articulation of values and that the ordering of wolves according to these values has much to do with the ideals these constituencies seek to achieve in relation to the natural world.

Border Work: Government Zones and “Problem Wolves”

I have spoken to why wolves in the United States have attracted so much attention as a species that represents the natural forces with which humans must contend. In the last three decades, with efforts to apply the legal mandate of the Endangered Species Act – reintroducing species to their historic ranges when and where it is feasible – wolves have again gained the spotlight. If once this spotlight involved focusing on where a gun should be aimed or a trap set, it is now used to highlight the role of wolves in a dramatic redemption drama of the land. Yet, the zones that were decided upon as the best chance for recovering Mexican wolves have led to a number of management quandaries.

When wolves were reintroduced to the Southwest in 1998 as a “nonessential experimental” population, the area into which they were reintroduced was comprised of primary and secondary recovery zones – known as the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA) – as well as a boundary known as the experimental population boundary (see Figs. 4-5, 4-6). The sum total of all these lands was designated the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA).

The boundaries of the larger MWEPA extend to the western edge of Arizona and the eastern edge of New Mexico, and are marked on the north and south by interstate highways I-40 and I-10, respectively. According to the final Environmental Impact Statement (FWS 1996),

wolves would not be allowed to establish territories outside of the recovery zones (unless on private lands, after consultation with the land owner). In the EIS, the logic for such recovery zones was explained as a management concession:

A limited and defined area is considered necessary to allow the wolf the highest degree of acceptance and recovery and to allow the FWS and cooperating agencies to plan for wolf management. Allowing the recovery areas to expand out continually would defeat this purpose. However, if we thought it was important to survival and recovery of the reintroduced population, it is possible that after thorough evaluation we could recommend changes to the recovery area boundaries (FWS 1996: 5.88; see also 5.84).

Of course, the wolves did not have the opportunity to see the maps or read the government documents that showed where and how they were subject to more management provisions if they dispersed beyond these zones. In most cases, if a wolf or wolves dispersed beyond the BRWRA they were likely to be captured and translocated back into some part of the recovery area not occupied by other wolves (FWS 1998a: 181). According to the technical component of the five-year review of the program,

Under the Final Rule (which requires that all wolves remain within the BRWRA), few “legal” dispersals could occur. For example, if a wolf moved the average lone-movement distance (i.e. 87 km) from the geographic center of the BRWRA and the FAIR [Fort Apache Indian Reservation] in a random direction, it would end outside the BRWRA 66% of the time. Thus, the average dispersing wolf in the ideal spot (i.e. the geographic center of the area that wolves can occupy) would still use areas outside the BRWRA 66% of the time. Indeed, single wolf movements resulted in the majority spending some time outside the BRWRA (68%) (MW 2005: TC-20, my emphasis).

Such boundaries have been one contributor to a high “failure rate” among wolves.¹⁸ Certainly, government biologists are well aware of this problem. John Oakleaf told me that since he started his job in 2002 as the Field Projects Coordinator,

I’ve come in and said, “Hi my name’s John Oakleaf ... we don’t need boundaries.” Because it’s a waste of our efforts – the field team, the people on the ground – it’s

¹⁸ According to the 5-year review of the program, collared wolves experienced an average failure rate of 64% from 1998-2003, with fifty-eight management-related removals and thirty-one human-caused mortalities. For the first six years of the program, removal of wolves for being outside of the recovery areas accounted for the highest percentage of management removals (MW 2005: TC-13, 29).

counterproductive to recovery, it's against other wolf recovery programs. ...I have no problem with giving people more flexibility. I have a problem with expending limited resources, limited people, chasing around animals for simply being outside the boundaries. They're always going to be outside the boundaries. That's how they're set up (interview, 12 July 2007, Alpine, AZ).

Oakleaf was one of the authors of the technical component of the five-year review, which officially noted such boundary issues:

We agree with Paquet *et al.* (2001) and Phillips *et al.* (2003) that removal of wolves for no other cause than being outside the BRWRA: 1) increases the cost of the overall recovery program and requires that field personnel be increasingly allocated to trap individual wide-ranging wolves, 2) fosters the erroneous perception that all wolves can be contained within artificial boundaries, 3) is in direct conflict with management philosophies employed by the USFWS on other projects (USFWS 1994a, 1995), 4) excludes habitat that could enhance recovery efforts, and 5) artificially restricts natural dispersal. Dispersal behavior is vital to establishing long-term population viability through colonization of new areas (MW 2005: TC-19).

As these comments indicated, early recommendations for the removal of the boundaries were suggested, along with the notable fact that no other endangered species was subject to any boundary rule comparable to the ones for Mexican wolves. Some of the effects of the boundary provisions had grave consequences for the wild Mexican wolf population. For example, a Mexican wolf died in 2001 after being chased by a government helicopter outside of the BRWRA, and in 2003 five wild-conceived pups died in captivity after their mother was captured for similar boundary transgressions (Robinson, Parsons, and Edward 2006: 4; see FWS 2001: 16, 27, and FWS 2003: 32).

Changes to the boundaries were publicly recommended in the three- and five-year review of the program (Paquet *et al.* 2001; MW 2005: AC-16, 17-19; MW 2005: ARC-3, no.1, 5, 7; see also Kelly *et al.* 2001), and noted again in 2007 along with other suggestions for changes to the final rule (FWS 2007c). As it stands, Mexican wolves are still subject to the provisions of the 1998 Final Rule, though, at the time of this writing, this appears likely to change.

It is instructive to illustrate the difficulties incurred by these boundaries through a comparison to the Northern Rockies reintroduction. Though the Yellowstone and Idaho reintroductions have not been without their controversies, overall, the Northern Rockies recovery project has been a feather in the cap of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mexican gray wolf reintroduction has been more difficult for a number of reasons (for a statistical comparison of the programs in the Southwest and the Northern Rockies, see Table 6-1), but at least one of the reasons for the disparity between the two programs can be attributed to the differences involved in the boundaries of the recovery zones. Though wolves in the Northern Rockies were afforded fewer protections once outside of Yellowstone National Park's boundaries, they were not captured and translocated simply for establishing territories outside of the Park.¹⁹

Because of this and other factors, local resistance in the Southwest, while strong, may also have been allowed to grow stronger in comparison to the Northern Rockies.²⁰ According to Oakleaf,

¹⁹ In the Southwest, wolves are not tracked down for being outside the boundaries. As the Final Rule stated, wolves will not be returned to the recovery zones if they make "occasional forays." Only if wolves establish territories outside the recovery area on public land, or if their removal is requested on private land outside the recovery area, are they removed (FWS 1998a: 183).

²⁰ As I noted in chapter four, historically, wolf numbers in the Southwest were a fraction of those of their northern relatives. Moreover, unlike Yellowstone, which is a National Park and therefore not subject to the same principles of multiple-use management as is the BRWRA (the majority of which is National Forest lands), more than two-thirds of the Mexican wolf recovery area is grazed by cattle. There is also the factor of public attention. One indication of this difference was the number of public comments collected during the drafting of the environmental impact statements: in contrast to the almost 18,000 comments received on the draft EIS regarding Mexican wolf reintroduction (FWS 1996: 5.82), in the Northern Rockies, the gray wolf draft EIS produced over 160,000 (Wilmot and Clark 2005: 143-44). While Mexican wolf reintroduction has indeed been controversial, and is critically important to some people, Yellowstone is a prime tourist spot, variously referred to as the "*ur*-site of American conservation" (McNamee 1997: 114) and as "a superlative, a refuge, a place for pilgrimage" (Trimble 2005: 178). The Blue Range is relatively remote, without the same kinds of amenities, national recognition, or historical importance that Yellowstone garners. For example, though some wolf tracking and howling trips are available to the public in the Southwest, Yellowstone National Park has regular outfitters who provide wolf "safari" tours, which range from relatively simple affairs to packages that include heated snow coaches, spa treatments, and gourmet meals back at the lodge (Sloan 2005). As powerful as scientific arguments about preserving a subspecies might be to some people, access and travel time heavily influence the political support and potentialities of wolf restoration.

The hard part of recovering wolves was done years ago, which is recovering the ungulates that are out there, the prey species. So then the next hard part is people. ...I think, when you look at it in the Northern Rockies, there was so many wolves so quickly, that people very quickly came to the realization that wolves are gonna be on the landscape and I better figure out ways to work with wolves and deal with wolves, and again, be a part of it... [whereas] down here the recovery process has been much slower for a whole variety of reasons. So we haven't gotten over the fight of whether wolves should be here or not. And whether or not they [people in the recovery areas] have to live with them or expend all their efforts fighting them, instead of figuring out ways to still productively go forth. Right now, we're still at the fight (interview, 12 July 2007, Alpine, AZ).

Within the “patchwork quilt of public and private priorities and values” (MW 2005: ARPCC-23) present in the Southwest, the boundaries were deemed necessary for the threads of the recovery plan not to unravel. Yet such boundaries reflected an unusual – many would say counterproductive – attempt to corral a species that required a great deal more space than some people would ever be willing to countenance.

Complicating matters, according to wolf advocates, is that political boundaries rarely, if ever, have complemented the ecological constraints that shape the dispersal of wolves across the landscape.²¹ While some environmental groups and concerned citizens have pushed for such complementarity, it is often alleged that Mexican wolves continue to be held captive by politically motivated mapping.

There is suitable habitat to support dispersing wolf populations in other areas of the Southwest (if wolves are able to make the journey). Some wildlife ecologists, particularly conservation biologists, have noted that while Mexican wolf reintroduction is an important step in re-establishing a top-level predator, the projected population targets defined by the 1996 Environmental Impact Statement fall far short of “the widely accepted recovery goal in

²¹ There have been calls for Mexican gray wolf recovery in both the Sky Island and Grand Canyon regions, and some frustration over the present limitations placed on wolf dispersals. Indeed, some claim that, according to what can be surmised of various gray wolf subspecies' historic ranges, reintroduced Mexican gray wolves largely are not within their historic habitat, which lies further south and closer to the Mexican border than the Blue Range (Hodges 2004; Robinson 2005a, 2005b).

conservation biology of interconnected, multiple populations within a species' natural range" (Povilitis *et al.* 2006: 942).²² In other words, even if Mexican wolves were able to multiply to the initial target goal of one hundred or more wolves, until the boundaries confining their dispersal are removed – and other provisions made for connectivity southward to Mexico and northward into the southern Rockies – they will always suffer from being an “island” population, subject to the genetic risk of inbreeding depression and the disruptions of frequent management interventions.²³

Many, like the Sierra Club's Grand Canyon chapter outreach director Sandy Bahr, wonder whether overmanagement of Mexican wolves has led to a “modified zoo existence” in which people tolerate only the behaviors that they find acceptable in wolves (interview, 20 July 2007, Phoenix, AZ). Bahr added that she questions “whether this is just turning into sort of this feel-good program where we can say that wolves are out there. But it's not really recovery. We haven't really moved from reintroduction to recovery” (ibid.). This is a complaint I heard a few times. One that stands out came from Jeff Williamson, director of the Phoenix Zoo, an institution that has been financially and administratively supportive of the Mexican wolf recovery program. Williamson, who has a graduate degree in conservation biology, was appalled at the boundaries as they stand under the 10j rule, and he believed that they stood in the way of wolf recovery. He appreciated the policy constraints faced by federal agents, but

²² As the authors of an article in the journal *Conservation Biology* put it, the Mexican wolf is “bureaucratically imperiled,” which was defined as “when economic interests or ideological opposition gain public agency collaboration or complacency in blocking genuine progress toward conservation as mandated under law” (Povilitis *et al.* 2006: 942). Michael Robinson, the conservation coordinator for the Center for Biological Diversity, put it more starkly: “We have a control program masquerading as a recovery program” (in Soussan 2003).

²³ Even the director of the FWS, Dale H. Hall, advocated for a similar vision of habitat connectivity in “A Call to Action” printed in *Fish & Wildlife News*. Hall argued that climate change created “the defining environmental and conservation issue of our time,” which demanded a broad landscape vision of conservation that included “a connected landscape of habitat ‘safety nets’ to aid wildlife as they adapt to climate change” (2008: 1).

confided, “the government doesn’t like when I say this: they [the recovery zones] are big zoo exhibits” (ibid.).

Wolves that roam outside the recovery zones can be problematic, but a more specific definition is reserved for “problem wolves.” According to the Final Rule of the program, a problem wolf is one that (1) depredates on lawfully present livestock, (2) is a member of a group/pack that is directly involved in livestock depredation, (3) were fed by or dependent on adult wolves involved in a livestock depredation, (4) have depredated on domestic animals (other than livestock) twice in one year, or (5) are habituated to human residences, or other facilities (FWS 1998a: 1772).²⁴ To those who are against wolf recovery in the Southwest, of course, any wolf might be considered a problem wolf. The government has a stricter definition, and a set of rules to follow when a “problem wolf” crosses the line too many times.

Beginning in 2006, by agency agreement, the Mexican wolf recovery team began removing wolves on the basis of a “three strikes” policy.²⁵ Known as Standard Operating Procedure 13 (SOP 13), if a wolf depredated on livestock three times within a year, it was labeled a “chronic problem” wolf (AMOC 2005a: SOP 0.D, p.3) and would be permanently removed from the wild population (“controlled”), whether by lethal “take” or by capture and removal to a captive management facility.²⁶

²⁴ One proposed change to the new Final Rule may involve “redefining ‘nuisance wolves’ and ‘problem wolves’ so as to exclude animals that scavenge on the carcasses of livestock that died of non-wolf causes” (FWS 2007c: 44606-07). This, as are other proposed changes to the Rule, including boundary modification, is pending a review of public comments and the issuance of a new EIS.

²⁵ Interestingly, and perhaps to avoid the criminal associations with the “three strikes” action, a 2008 “clarification memo” for SOP 13 noted, “Henceforth, AMOC and the IFT shall use the term ‘depredation incident’ rather than ‘strike’ in reference to wolf depredations.” Time will tell if the new language catches on with the public or not. Available online: http://www.azgfd.gov/w_c/es/documents/MWSOP13.ControlofMexicanWolves.ClarificationMemo.DraftFinal.20080507.PublicReview.pdf (accessed May 2008).

²⁶ In addition to “problem” and “chronic problem” designations, a non-depredating wolf that scavenges is known merely a “nuisance” wolf (AMOC 2005b: SOP 13).

The outcomes of this protocol resulted in the removal of thirty-five wolves for livestock depredation incidents in 2006-2007 alone, an equal number to the number of wolves removed for such incidents in all the years combined prior to the enactment of SOP 13 (1998-2005).²⁷ Critics of this rule have argued that beyond the punitive and seemingly arbitrary number of “strikes” before a wolf is “controlled,” neither the wolf’s genetic contribution, importance to its pack (e.g., a mother with pups), or the possibility of such depredations ceasing is taken into consideration (Povilitis *et al.* 2006: 944).²⁸ Others question if, when standard government protocol involves assiduous avoidance of anthropomorphizing wolf behavior, applying a “three strikes” policy to wolves is an unwarranted attribution of willful behavior to “problem” wolves.²⁹

Based on a statistical analysis of wolf deaths, translocations, and overall population counts in the Southwest, Jean Ossorio and David Parsons concluded that, since 2003, the wild population of Mexican gray wolves was stagnant or declining (Ossorio and Parsons 2008; Parsons 2007a).³⁰ Ossorio and Parsons expressed a concern held by many who supported wolf recovery: the government was abusing its mandate to reintroduce wolves by rigidly applying a

²⁷ Compared to the seventy total removals for livestock depredation, boundary-related removals for the years 1998-2007 totaled thirty-nine (the second-highest cause of Mexican wolf management removals since the program’s inception). One-hundred and forty-two wolves have been removed from the wild for management reasons, which means that almost half of all removals were livestock-related. As of 2007, there had been eleven lethal control actions performed by the government agencies, and all of these occurred after 2002. See also Table 6-1. Statistics for the program are available online: http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/pdf/MW_removals.pdf (accessed May 2008).

²⁸ For these reasons, two separate lawsuits were filed by several environmental groups in May 2008, which essentially argued that SOP 13 conflicted with the mandate of the ESA (Associated Press 2008).

²⁹ It should be noted that the Northern Rockies reintroduction included a “strike” policy as well (see Wilmot and Clark 2005: 149-50), though, unlike the Mexican wolf project, there were plenty more wolves with which to work and no issues involving genetic representation about which to be concerned.

³⁰ According to the projections of the final EIS, the Mexican wolf recovery team could be expected to cease releasing wolves into the wild by 2002. This has not happened since the target goal of at least 100 wolves had yet to be met. Some argue that even current numbers of wild wolves are artificially inflated by the release of captive wolves, masking the high rate of wolf removal actions. For instance, Parsons argued, “The only reason that the agency was reporting any progress at all [from 2002 on] was that they were pumping in wolves to the program. Without the new releases, the population line would have been flat or declining for the last four years” (interview, 16 July 2007, Albuquerque, NM).

“three strikes” policy that recalled government-led extirpation “just like the old days” (Parsons 2007b: 20). Of SOP 13 in particular, Parsons maintained that it was “an inflexible punitive management protocol” (2007b: 20).

Parsons, who helped design the initial Final Rule (also known as the 10j rule) for the project, expressed deep frustration to me when he described the SOP 13 management provision:

SOP 13 is not legally required by the Rule. You read the papers, they make you think that. The agency is bound by the Rule; bound by the law. Go to section 10j of the ESA, and there’s a statement in there that you can’t write a rule that allows so much taking of wolves that you don’t make progress toward recovery. ...To do that, we only put in the Rule three very limited provisions for taking wolves in the federal regulation itself: one is protecting a life; and one is pulling back wolves that cross the boundaries; the other was for ranchers to take wolves that were attacking a guard animal; one other very limited circumstance, a wolf caught in the act of attacking livestock on private property. We very deliberately put that outside the Rule – that the agency may initiate management plans to address potential issues involving livestock depredation (interview, 16 July 2007, Albuquerque, NM).

Parsons asserted that as a “conservation requirement” based on federal law there was “a higher requirement of the law than killing wolves” (ibid.). With a bit of biblical phrasing to complement his ecological values, Parsons laid out the commandment as follows: “Thou shalt not kill so many wolves that you don’t progress toward recovery” (ibid.). He concluded his thoughts with a prognosis that he and others have referred to as the potential for the “second extinction” of Mexican wolves (see Parsons 2007: 20; Stevens 2008: 12; Valdez 2008). In short, he argued, “If SOP 13 were carried out to its full extent, they [the recovery team] could kill every wolf out there” (interview, 16 July 2007, Albuquerque, NM).

This was echoed to me by others. When I asked Michael Robinson what the most important factor was in wolf reintroduction, his answer was blunt and immediate: “Not killing them. You know, I mean, it’s essentially a matter of public policy. The federal government is the most effective killer of wolves – limiting the federal government in killing wolves” (interview, 5 June 2007, Piños Altos, NM). I also asked Robinson if there was any form of

management that he did find appropriate, to which he responded, “Sure. Monitoring of the animals, particularly to get a handle on poaching and aid law enforcement, releases into the wild, and brief supplemental feeding, as is done. And that’s pretty much it” (ibid.).

Some feel as Robinson does: that while the reintroduction itself was a success, the management of wolves since then has been riddled with mistakes. When I asked Jean Ossorio to pick one word that described Mexican wolves, she chose “beleaguered,” and continued, “My gut feeling is if we don’t get this thing on track and solved within ten years we can write these guys off [the wolves]. They [the government] will have succeeded in the second extermination of the Mexican gray wolf” (interview, 5 June 2007, Las Cruces, NM).

Whether because of problematic boundaries or “problem” wolves, the agencies’ circumscription of wolf behavior and mobility reveals a “moral landscape” (see Lynn 2002) that, according to critics, deeply threatens a meaningful Mexican wolf recovery.³¹ Mexican wolves are on the ground but are also always in danger of becoming “matter out of place” by violating prohibitions that they cannot sense. Proposals for internal and external boundary adjustments are currently (as of early 2008) on the table (see FWS 2007c), and many hope that such changes will contribute toward a Mexican wolf population with fewer “problems” in its ranks.

Government agents in the early twentieth century used to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border, hoping to safeguard the nation’s purity from wolf “invaders.” Clearly a great deal has changed since then, as government biologists are now seeking to find publicly acceptable means for best recovering Mexican wolves. As the proposed changes to the Final Rule indicate, wildlife

³¹ In an evaluation of both pro- and anti-wolf perspectives, Lynn argued, “The geographies we create and destroy reveal the moral landscapes of our lives, as human agency has consequences for human and non-human well-being that are literally drawn on the landscape... [A]ll landscapes are laden (for good or ill) with moral values. All landscapes, and especially the landscapes adapted for human use, inevitably privilege some human and wild beings over others” (2002: 317). Because it treats the intersections between the fields of geography and ethics, Lynn’s work has been a valuable point of departure and dialogue for my own research.

managers are adapting as they go as well. But the notion of a “problem” wolf raises questions about whether or not wolves are truly the problem. Indeed, people on both sides of the issue sometimes argue that management difficulties are less a matter of problem wolves and more a matter of problem people.³²

Homeland Security

*This land is your land, this land is my land ... this land was made for you and me.*³³

Early twentieth-century singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie, a blue-collar champion of workers’ rights and a socialist sympathizer, penned a feel-good vision of open spaces and common ownership that has become a classic. But like so many utopias and peaceable kingdoms, the song expressed a concept of land that never really existed in practice. Wolf reintroductions have made it clear that land battles often skew toward the “my land” claim when it comes to “you” and “me.” Moreover, few people are willing to grant that nonhuman animals like wolves might have claims of their own on the land.

“One explanation for the continued resistance [to wolf restoration],” environmental law professor Holly Doremus observed, “is that the significance of these struggles is not limited to their financial consequences. These are battles for control of the relationship between

³² Perverse abuse of the “three strikes” policy may also lead to further modifications to this SOP 13 protocol. In a controversial article in *High Country News*, John Dougherty reported that cowboy Mike Miller intentionally branded cattle less than half a mile from a Mexican wolf den with the hope of getting a “third strike” on the alpha female wolf, and was ultimately successful in doing so (Dougherty 2007: 11, 16). The Adobe-Slash ranch, where this incident took place, remains a “black hole” for wolves, with over twenty wolves removed for depredation incidents (Dougherty 2007: 15). Miller has since denied the statements he made to *High Country News*, and a federal investigation is underway (see Dougherty 2008). This event actually may have served to catalyze further public support for less invasive forms of Mexican wolf management. For instance, because of this incident and the confusion surrounding it, New Mexico governor Bill Richardson (2007) released a statement calling for the suspension and/or modification of SOP 13 and directed the State Game Commission and New Mexico Game and Fish to “redouble” their efforts “to promote healthy wolf populations living in reasonable compatibility with our communities and land stewards in New Mexico.”

³³ Woody Guthrie, “This Land Is Your Land,” Woody Guthrie Foundation, Ludlow Music, Inc., Copyright 1956 (renewed), 1958 (renewed), 1970 and 1972. (Online: http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/This_Land.htm [accessed 3 June 2008]).

humankind and nature, pitting the individual against the government, local interests against national ones, and rural residents against urbanites” (1998: 78). These various scales of concern are clearly evident in the contestations over Mexican wolf reintroduction, for the communities into which wolves were reintroduced are, for the time being, economically and culturally dependent on livestock operations and are known for their suspicion of government agencies beyond the county level.

Terry Johnson, Arizona Game and Fish’s chief of nongame and endangered wildlife, has facilitated numerous public outreach meetings for the recovery project in rural areas located within the recovery zones. His experience led him to believe that “Wolf conservation is more painful in the Southwest, because these core values [such as anti-federalism and property rights] run deeper in the Southwest than they did in other parts of the country” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ). In part, this has to do with a fierce regionalism that prides itself for its independence. Johnson explained that because New Mexico and Arizona were incorporated so late into the union (they achieved statehood in 1912 as the 47th and 48th states, respectively), the feeling among rural people is “I’m my own man, I’m still the last leg of the frontier here. I don’t want to be part of the state, part of the federal, except when it’s to my benefit” (ibid.).

It is at the local level that spatial claims and conflicting boundaries are most evident, for at close range wolf reintroduction takes on a different color and spatial transgressions become easier to identify. In a sense, the Mexican wolf recovery project has laid a new set of boundaries on the land, which invariably overlapped and conflicted with some local residents’ extended sense of home.

Among other items that define the production of sacred space, David Chidester and Edward Linenthal argued that sacred space was “inevitably contested space” because “a sacred

space is not merely discovered, or founded, or constructed; it is claimed, owned, and operated by people advancing specific interests” (1995: 15). While government biologists would resist the characterization, the recovery zones for Mexican wolves, among other things, are a spatial claim that expresses values about what the Southwestern landscape should include. Like any sacred space, it “anchors more than merely myth or emotion. It anchors relations of meaning and power that are at stake in the formation of a larger social reality” (1995: 17).

Yet, others have their own claims and their own ideas about what kind of “larger social reality” is desirable. Rural resistance to wolf reintroduction can be viewed in this light, for it is informed by an attachment to home and homeland that creates a sense of localized community as well as a sense of inviolable space. As Thomas Tweed observed, “Homemaking does not end at the front door. It extends to the boundaries of the territory that group members allocentrically imagine as their space...” (2006: 110). Such spatial claims are often in conflict with the imagined boundaries of others’ claims. Tweed, similar to Chidester and Linenthal, recognized that the act of “homemaking” is entangled with the opposing meanings attributed to specific geographies: “Sacred geographies are contested. ... Sometimes one homeland displaces another. Homemaking exerts power as it makes meaning” (2006: 113).

Wolves figure prominently in such spatial constructions for both pro- and anti-wolf factions. I have already noted the ways in which wolves are publicly championed as the “essence” of wildness, an expression of ecological “redemption,” or as the missing piece in the “wholeness” of the land. Wolves serve a very different symbolic function for those who view their communities as threatened by an unnecessary intrusion, denoting the forces that are to be kept out, and thus, the search for control and stability against opposing spatial claims.

As “outside invaders,” wolves are labeled in such a way that they bear a symbolic load as an agent of pollution and as violators of the integrity and purity of local conceptions of community and homeland. Whether wolves are conceived as an agricultural pestilence, homewreckers, toxic waste, or terrorists, the common thread uniting these “othering” metaphors is the notion of a polluting force that compromises or defiles a proper ordering of space.

Lori Schmidt, the wolf curator at the International Wolf Center in Ely, Minnesota, told me about a startling “othering” metaphor that captures well the symbolic threat that wolves pose to certain people. At a public hearing in Idaho, Schmidt recalled, someone claimed that “the wolf is the Saddam Hussein of the animal world” (interview, 26 June 2007, Ely, MN). Schmidt also contrasted her experience in the West, where she was working on the Northern Rockies reintroduction in the early 1990s, to her native home in the Midwest, a place that she said, despite its problems, seemed progressive in comparison. It puzzled her “how people can live on a landscape as expansive as the West, who theoretically would be exposed to the natural world, and be so disconnected to it. That’s always amazed me. But that’s the idea: the only natural world that they can live in is the one they can control. If they can’t control it they don’t want any part of it; and predators you can’t control” (ibid.).

There has been generational turnover among ranchers in the Gila and the Blue, but the continuity of views about wolves as predator and polluting agent is striking. For instance, Joe Evans wrote in the mid-twentieth century that the

idea of preserving the lobo is no more sensible than it would be to pet a rattlesnake or coddle a bandit or rapist who was endangering the lives of your loved ones or the sanctity of your home. ... To kill the lobo wherever you find him is to render a service to mankind and to all wildlife (in Evans [1951] 2005: 83).

One of the ranchers with whom I spoke, Darcy Ely, had an updated set of metaphors that expressed a similar view of violation:

We've all said take 'em to downtown Phoenix and Tucson, if they really want them that bad. To us the wolves are like gangs. They've moved into our neighborhood and they've terrorized us, if you want to compare it to an urban [perspective]. They also are like cancer: people know about it, but it's not their problem until they get it. And cancer goes into remission. 2001-2002 was bad on us, 2003-2004 they were in remission, they came back out in 2005 with the Aspen pack, they went back away, so, they're back again [in 2007]. ... Wolves are a cancer and wolves are a gang, if you want to put a symbol on them – to us. That's how we explain it to an urban person (interview, 7 June 2007, Willcox, AZ).³⁴

Unlike Evans, Ely was not advocating for the direct killing of wolves. But she articulated well the social disease (gangs and cancer) that wolves represented as an invasive presence on the landscape.

As sociologist Rik Scarce noted, wolves often serve as a “surrogate” for anxiety about threats to local community integrity (see also Nie 2003). Many of the concerns of ranchers, as he documented in his ethnographic research on rural communities in the Yellowstone area, were also related to the breakdown of community accountability. As “newcomers” move into rural areas, sometimes buying up land for the purposes of retreating to a “trophy home” for a few weeks out of the year, community bonds were threatened. When wolves were added to this mix, they were sometimes cast as “homewreckers” or as a foreign disease that increased anxieties and further threatened the ties that held these communities together (Scarce 2005: 131-132).

³⁴ Similar statements were made in the hearings preceding the Yellowstone reintroduction (see McIntyre 1995: 379-396). One example, from Montana rancher Dave Witt, captured well many of the misgivings that ranchers have toward environmentalists and the government as outsiders: “It’s sad when a small minority can dictate to the majority how we are to live and what we have to live with. This is the approach of Communism. This isn’t just an issue of introducing wolves into the Greater Yellowstone. It’s the issue of taking of private property rights guaranteed by our Constitution. These environmentalists and special-interest groups will keep working on our private property rights until we have no more left. It doesn’t matter if it’s the wolf, the water, the salmon or the spotted owls. It’s all the same. I find it real disturbing in Congress as well as the people on the wolf committee. As far as I can tell, there’s very few that work for a living. They either are government, state or private parasites living off the taxpayers. ... We in agriculture will protect our livestock and our private property from all predators, whether they have wings, four legs, two legs, by any means possible. No wolves, nowhere. Take the taxpayers’ dollars wasted on the study and go clean up the environment in the inner city” (Witt, in McIntyre 1995: 382-83). For an example of an ardent, traveling “evangelist” against wolf recovery, see Gillett in Ring (2008).

An extended sense of home is dependent on maintaining working relationships with one's neighbors, so it is unsurprising that it is not simply ranchers who feel threatened by wolves. Rick Lobello, the former executive director of the Big Bend Natural History Association, noted that resistance in Texas to wolf reintroduction was induced by a community-wide peer pressure: "How long do you think you would stay in business if your customers knew you were pro-wolf? What if you owned a gas station or a small grocery store on the edge of town? How long do you think your business would last if you lost the patronage of people working in the livestock industry?" (1995: 437).

In the Southwest, other endangered species have been controversial in the Apache-Sitgreaves and Gila National Forests, leading some to comment that their communities are the ones that are endangered, as they are slowly chipped away bit by bit. In 1998, days after wolves had been positioned for release, one rancher in the Blue Range called the ESA a "death sentence" for the community, explaining, "You have this pie, and you take out a slice for the endangered New Mexican spotted owl, then you take out a slice for several types of endangered minnows, and another for the endangered willow fly catcher, and then one for the endangered Apache trout. ...It is all a deal to get us out of here" (Marks, in Miniclier 1998).

Wildlife biologist Harley Shaw wrote that his coffee breaks in small towns throughout the Southwest have led him to conclude that arguments about livestock, wild ungulate populations, or harm to humans are not where the real roots of resistance to wolf reintroduction are; "More important is the belief that the government has, once again, imposed upon them a decision in which they had no or little say" (in Brown [1983] 2002: foreword, np). I found Shaw's perception of rural resistance to be an accurate description of the attitudes held by some of the people with whom I spoke. If wolves were thought of as polluting agents, then they were also

often seen as symptomatic of a much larger intrusion that heralded a further loss of local control. Generally, the frustrations expressed to me were less about wolves themselves and more with feeling like “a little pawn” (Darcy Ely, interview, 7 June 2007, Willcox, AZ). Because populations in rural counties of Arizona and New Mexico were not large enough to mount a formidable opposition movement, one rancher explained, “that’s why we get picked on” (Daisy Mae Cannon, interview, 7 June 2007, near York, AZ). Or as one resident in the BRWRA asked, “Is it right for one group of people to dictate to one group of people how to live?” (Jess Carey, interview, 15 July 2007, Reserve, NM).

The perception that urban dwellers and “outsiders” are responsible for rural woes has also led to some interesting proposals. Forestry professor Martin Nie recalled that one native elder in Alaska described his desire to do a wolf air-drop on New York City, so that the people could confront the reality that they were imposing on others (2003: 128). Or as a placard protesting wolf reintroduction in Arizona summarily put it, “Don’t Import Wolves, Deport Environmentalists” (in Holaday 2003: 127). The following exchange captures this feeling:

Daisy Mae Cannon: If these people really want the wolf, why don’t they put some of them up there in Phoenix and Tucson in the damn parks?

Gavin Van Horn: You mean in captivity?

Cannon: Yeah! Why turn ‘em out on us! If they want to see those wolves so bad, put ‘em in Central Park in New York, put ‘em in the dumb parks out in California, and every big city, put some wolves in there. Let the people go and hear ‘em, let them go look at ‘em, let them feed ‘em there instead of out on us (interview, 7 July 2007, near York, AZ).

Cannon later told me that she suspected her county (Greenlee) was selected for wolf reintroduction because of its low population. She was correct. The selection process for reintroduction sites was based on a number of factors, but certainly human population density was a primary consideration in the attempt to minimize human-wolf interaction. However, Cannon interpreted this selection as evidence that the urbanites of the Southwest pulled the

strings for wolves without due consideration for the people that would have to deal with the consequences. In a tone of exasperation, she asked, “How can we buck the people in Phoenix, in Tucson? They don’t care about us. They care about what they want” (ibid.).³⁵

In New Mexico, Catron County provides an instructive – if extreme – example of how problems of access and claims to public lands can boil over when stoked by what are seen as unnecessary government restrictions.³⁶ Catron County is the largest county in New Mexico, with an area of approximately 7000 mi² but a population of only 3500 people. Seventy-five percent of the county consists of national forest, state forest, or Bureau of Land Management land (MW 2005: SEC 2-2). It is difficult in such a context to avoid some form of governmental presence, but the heat generated by oppositional claims about endangered species has attracted the greatest attention and resentment. Restrictions on grazing permits or ideological battles over county rights do not create as distinct a bull’s-eye as particular species of animals do.

Wolves are not the first species to provoke fears of community dissolution, and to understand the controversy surrounding wolves in a place like Catron County it is necessary to comprehend the links between previous animals that have been listed for protection since the Endangered Species Act became a law in 1973. For the Northwest, the debates that drew

³⁵ There may be some statistical grounds for an accusation of general public disconnect over wolf reintroduction. Even in New Mexico and Arizona, a 2005 survey of 1514 residents reported that only roughly two-thirds (67%) of the respondents were aware of Mexican wolf reintroduction at all, though 62% of all respondents were in favor of it and only 13% opposed it (see MW 2005: AC-2). A poll conducted by Research & Polling, Inc. in April and May 2008 showed increased approval for the program, with 77% of Arizonans and 69% of New Mexicans either supporting or strongly supporting the reintroduction. Yet 26% of Arizonans and 20% of New Mexicans said they knew nothing about the program (see Holmes 2008).

³⁶ Don Hoffman, a resident of Catron County, told me he was required to maintain a gun in working condition (this was due to a resolution passed in the County in 1994), and that as an environmentalist, he was required to register with the county for de-programming training, though to his knowledge no one had yet signed up for the program (interview, 11 July 2007, near Alpine, AZ). All of the wolf advocates with whom I spoke were well aware of Catron County’s resistance to wolf recovery, and some even had their own set of “othering” labels for what they saw as the rampant dysfunction of the county, such as calling the town of Reserve “Reverse” or Catron County “Cartoon County.” For more on Catron County’s controversial role in wolf recovery, see Boggs ([1999] 2005); Walley ([2000] 2005); and Dougherty (2007).

national attention were over the infamous spotted owl, but the Southwest had its own spotted owl, the Mexican spotted owl, which was listed as threatened in 1993. Timber cutting was regulated to protect spotted owl nesting habitat as early as 1989 in the Gila National Forest (Ford 1995; Davis 1996). Residents of Catron County still lament the loss of their sawmill, which went out of business in 1990 when restrictions on cutting timber in the forests made it an economic liability to its owners, Stone Forest Industries. According to one resident, the spotted owl “shut down the sawmill and basically put Catron County in a depression we never recovered from” (Jess Carey, interview, 15 July 2007, Reserve, NM; see also MW 2005: SEC 7-3). In a county where the unemployment rate was double the national average in 1990 (MW 2005: SEC 2-18, 19), the loss of the sawmill, which bolstered the county’s (and its schools’) tax base, hit hard. Of course, wolves – even more than owls given the fact that owls pose no threat to cattle – would be considered problematic whether or not the government had a vested interest in reintroducing them. Yet, with the protections afforded them under the auspices of the ESA (even as a “nonessential experimental” population), wolves are the worst possible animal that could be reintroduced into Arizona or New Mexico from the perspective of county residents who are economically dependent on public lands.³⁷

Resistance to wolves extends beyond potential economic burdens, however. Compensation payments or financial incentives are not enough to alleviate entrenched hostilities related to the perception that the government is responsible for social ills. For example, Catron County Commissioner Hugh B. McKeen challenged FWS Southwest Regional Director Benjamin Tuggle with the following words: “Can I pay you \$100,000 a day [to] go live in hell

³⁷ Terry Johnson admitted, “If we could have got wolves going before the spotted owl hit the fan, it would have been so much easier [to reintroduce Mexican wolves], but I was slow. There’s a downside to some of my great planning” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ). Johnson was referring here to the lengthy process of surveys, public outreach, work with the Arizona Game and Fish commission, and site selection that took place during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

every other day? Money going to help you any?” (New Mexico State Game Commission 2007: 8). Or as rancher Tom McNab stated at the same meeting, “You can’t possibly compensate for what this is doing to our lives. We don’t feel that we have to enter into deals with you so you can invade our lives and violate our rights” (ibid.).³⁸ One writer stated, “The Mexican gray wolf is just the latest symbol of unwanted federal interference. To many Catron County residents, in fact, the wolf is a physical threat as well as a symbol of government tyranny” (Dougherty 2007: 14).

I asked John Oakleaf directly about why wolves were a source of such controversy in places like Catron County, whereas other predators did not raise the same sorts of concerns. He gave me one of the best summaries I have heard to date:

One, their granddaddy didn’t shoot the last [lion or bear]. ...Number two, the government didn’t do it to them. We didn’t put lions on them. We didn’t put bears on them. They were always on them. ...And then number three, lions and bears, if they kill a cow, you can get a depredation permit, and you can go out and kill that animal. Wolves, you gotta wait around for the government to do something. There’s not immediate retribution, and it’s not in their hands, the retribution (interview, 12 July 2007, Alpine, AZ).

AGFD regional nongame specialist Dan Groebner explained such government opposition in the following way:

Catron County has a reputation of being anti-government ... same with people in the Blue. A lot of people moved out here to get away from government regulations, government programs and all that, and I kinda did that too. ...It’s not the wolf itself that people are opposed to in Catron County, it’s government meddling, interference in their lives. The folks out here on the ground have to deal with every endangered species. They have no choice. ...I can see how they could be getting nervous and upset... The folks out there feel like they are getting a raw deal, and in some ways they are (interview, 13 July 2007, Pinetop, AZ).

³⁸ Clearly, no incentive program will please all people concerned with the project. However, as the five-year review noted, “Such a program would not eliminate opposition, but it would separate those who are adamantly opposed regardless from those who are opposed at least in part because they bear brunt of the real (i.e. documented) and perceived (i.e. undocumented or speculative) economic impacts of reintroduction” (MW 2005: AC-4).

While clearly sympathetic to the idea of being left alone, Groebner concluded, “But it’s not their land ... [and] I wouldn’t be able to face them if I thought wolves were gonna put them out of business” (ibid.). Groebner also noted that on the Arizona side of the recovery zones, nearly one hundred public meetings were held before wolves were ever released, which resulted in much less public “damage control” than was needed in New Mexico (ibid.).

The latest instance of a need for “damage control” in Catron County emerged from another concern related to Mexican wolves. On 20 April 2006, Jess Carey – a one-time professional trapper with forensic investigation and law enforcement experience – was hired by the Catron County commission to serve as the Catron County Wolf Interaction Investigator. Carey, along with the commission, were distressed that not enough was being done by the federal government to investigate Mexican wolves that they felt had become dangerously habituated to people. Of particular concern to Carey were reports he received from some county residents that children were suffering from nightmares and others were afraid to go outside for fear of wolves.³⁹

According to Carey, the county hired two psychiatrists to examine the children in question; the results were that the children were diagnosed with a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This indirectly resulted in the printing of a wallet-size card by the lead agencies on the Mexican wolf recovery project for distribution to those in the wolf recovery area (Fig. 6-1).⁴⁰

Knowing that the 10j rule allowed for harassment of wolves – and that the government actually encouraged such harassment and aversion techniques so that wolves do not become

³⁹ Carey mentioned one family who were given radio telemetry devices by the government in order to know when wolves were in the area of their home. He was appalled by this: “Can you imagine settin’ in your house waiting for a *beep, beep, beep*, letting you know that here they come again, back to your house?” (interview, 15 July 2007, Reserve, NM).

⁴⁰ Shawna Nelson, the outreach coordinator for the Mexican wolf project until January 2008, told me that Congressman Steve Pearce – as a way to respond to the concerns of his constituency – was the person who requested such cards be made by the FWS (interview, 12 July 2007, Alpine, AZ).

habituated – I asked Carey why people are not assured that they can defend themselves. He replied:

When this program started, they basically brainwashed all the people in the recovery area with threats – if you shoot a wolf you’re looking at a 100,000 dollar fine, you’re looking at a year in jail, and that was pounded into all the people – so much that if a wolf attacks livestock on private property, and you legally – the law says that you can shoot that wolf to protect your livestock on private property – none of these people will do that. They haven’t done it. It’s happened right in front of them, and they haven’t done it. ... They’re afraid of the repercussions, they’re afraid of retaliation. Every rancher out there knows that they could lose their permit if they shoot a wolf, and they’re all scared to death. The people are so afraid, that, I feel, that’s what’s going to cause an incident because they’re not going to act in time if a wolf decides to grab a child (interview, 15 July 2007, Reserve, NM).

Carey expressed several times the feeling that rural people were being ignored because the government was so focused on recovering wolves, and that the process for documenting a wolf depredation was set up in such a way as to discourage confirmed depredation incidents. For him, basic protections were not much to ask for, especially when it came to possible psychological trauma, but thus far all their pleas had fallen on “deaf ears,” which led to the feeling that “we have no value. The program is the only thing that counts” (ibid.). He also assured me that his position as Wolf Incident Investigator was one that (because of the perceived absence of government attention) was created for such protections. In the final analysis, Carey stated, “We’re going to do something even if we go to jail ... because we’re not gonna allow these wolves to damage our children. That’s the bottom line. When the day comes, and it’s gonna come, that a wolf physically attacks one of our kids, they’re gonna have a civil uprising in the county. ... We’re not demanding anything that any other American wouldn’t demand” (ibid.).

As Carey here suggested, talk about wolves is nested within a number of overlapping claims. I would argue, however, that the primary contest is over variant notions of the sacred space of the homeland. In Catron County, the fear is that as wolves penetrate this extended sense of home, they will also violate the “inner circles” of this home (the actual private property on

which individual families live), and then the inner sanctum itself, the human body.⁴¹ Even more egregious, the “innocent” bodies of children are at stake, and anxiety over their defilement by predatory beasts has been enough to create a latter-day Red Riding Hood narrative. Mexican wolves are thus not only at the door, there are fears they might pass through that final threshold.

Shawna Nelson, who worked as the outreach coordinator for the recovery project until January 2008, remarked specifically on the PTSD claims coming from Catron County:

It seems to be a very powerful thing, you know, anytime you bring in children that’s gonna be ... something with staying power. ...How do you deal with that? It’s a cultural perspective. I liken the fear of wolves to a religion in that you have a certain religion and you might not know why you believe what you believe but you were raised that way, and that’s just the way it is. It’s sort of like that when you’re dealing with wolves. You were raised that way, and that’s what mom and dad said and this is just the way it goes. ...How do you deal with that? A person’s fear is a person’s fear. ...You can’t say to these people, “That doesn’t make any sense,” because it is real for them. But how to disarm that, or how to whatever – even if there was a way, I don’t think they would be willing to ... [because] it’s a good political ploy maybe for stamping out this project (interview, 12 June 2007, Alpine, AZ).

Not everyone fears for their children in Catron County, and some residents have stated that they find such claims overblown.⁴² In the letters section of *High Country News*, one man who resided in Glenwood, New Mexico, for the winters and in Alaska for the rest of the year wrote, “I’m not sure how the threatened child issue became so prominent in Catron County. ...In 20 years of living year-round just outside of Denali National Park, some of the wolfiest country on earth, the

⁴¹ For society cast in the symbolic image of the body, see Douglas ([1966] 2002: 141-159).

⁴² Some people suspect that, especially among non-ranchers, those in Catron County are more amenable to wolf recovery than the media might lead the general public to believe. Terry Johnson noted that the results of surveys (Johnson 1990; Duda and Young 1995), even in rural counties, were predictable: people polled consistently favored reintroduction more than the numbers of those who did not. Johnson enthusiastically stated, “Even in Catron County, the orthodox druids of Western civilization, you’ve got a majority of the people in that county, favor wolf reintroduction. God, they hate the results of those polls” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ). One environmental advocate with whom I spoke, based on first-hand experience, told me that when she has spoken to people individually in Catron County, they have confided in her that they would like to see some changes but feel the need to be careful about advertising such feelings (see also MW 2005: SEC 7-4).

worst problem I had with wolves was having them steal a frozen bison head I'd left in my yard" (Seegert 2008: 28). The writer continued by noting that even with habituated wolves in parts of Denali, there had been no aggressive incidents. He concluded, "Catron kids are a lot more likely to be killed by vehicles than by wolves. And that ain't likely to change" (ibid.).

What is clear is that resistance to wolf reintroduction encompasses a range of non-wolf issues, and for those most impacted by the recovery plan – even if indirectly through their neighbors' complaints, anxieties, or economic struggles – it is easy to feel powerless and embattled by outside agents of change, whether human or wolf. A final aspect of rural discontent is simpler: many rural people just want to be left alone. They moved to the country or have been there for generations to enjoy the pleasures of not being bothered too much. For some, wolves have significantly changed this feeling of relative isolation.

When I spoke to Jack Diamond in July 2007, for example, a wolf pack had established a territory in the immediate vicinity of his ranch. The pack already had two depredations, and under the stipulations of SOP 13, one more "strike" would instigate a process of mandatory capture and removal of the pack from the wild. He expressed his discontent over the situation to me:

This summer our lives have been completely disrupted because we have this pack of wolves on us and that's all we do is worry about this pack of wolves. They've got two strikes right now, so they're lacking one strike. Then I'm gonna be caught up in the middle of another thing. We just want to be left alone. We don't bother anybody. We're just here making a living. We don't like the spotlight. If they have to remove the wolves, I'm caught in the middle of that situation. It's been a mess for me and my entire family. My wife can tell you that it's affected me, I guess emotionally, and my temperament. I'm a lot more on edge. We have plenty to do without this extra added issue. We can't just walk away (interview, 15 July 2007, Beaverhead Ranch, Catron County, NM).

Some ranchers have dedicated significant amounts of time to public meetings, committees, stakeholder groups, interviews with the media, and other non-ranching business because of wolves. Typically they bear the costs and burdens of these extra curricular activities. But

perhaps Diamond said it best: he cannot just walk away. Without the spaces and the tolerance to let them do so, neither can the wolves.

Opening Space

The first marketing of barbed wire occurred in 1874; according to Paul Starrs, this marked the transition from cattle kingdoms to localized ranching operations (1998: 12). Starrs argued that such bounded spaces were harbingers of a “land ethic” and reflected “a goal of stability,” because people needed to stay in place to tend their livestock (1998: 13). In contrast to this charitable interpretation of marking property with steel points, others have viewed barbed wire as physically and ideologically severing opportunities for the implementation of a larger land ethic.

Sandy Bahr, for example, in line with the Sierra Club’s focus of getting people involved with environmental concerns through hands-on backcountry trips, occasionally leads volunteer activities to help with some of the manual labor involved with wolf recovery efforts. She has participated in howling surveys and some building projects, but the work that brings her the most pleasure is a form of small-scale demolition. “Oh God, you know what, my favorite activity is tearing down barbed wire,” Bahr told me. “To watch the forest open up, to have a clear line, just the idea, yeah, it’s symbolic of freedom and all the things that are good in life” (interview, 20 July 2007, Phoenix, AZ). Bahr noted that on one trip, a former Game and Fish employee helped out, “and he just went on and on about how he liked taking down barbed wire” (ibid.).

Barbed wire is not a major problem for wolves. Physically, roads present a more formidable obstacle. Politically, the current recovery zone boundaries can become lethal lines in the right circumstances. Ideologically, however, tearing down barbed wire, as Bahr indicated, had great symbolic power, distilling the feeling of a world unbounded by the sharp edges of exclusive human claims, a “world of freedom and all the things that are good in life.”

I have argued that an important facet of understanding wolf-human relationships is to be found at the margins of how we define our landscapes, our communities, and our social identities. The moral mapping of place and the ideologically charged boundaries that are its product are the flashpoints of control, the places that most clearly demonstrate an exertion of social power to push, solidify, or break boundaries. As Bahr's exuberance about the symbolic power of tearing down barbed wire suggests, these ideological and physical margins are also expressive of the shifting terrain of public values. For almost five centuries, Americans tried to keep wolves out, on the perimeter; in the twenty-first century, in the Southwest, the margins are sites of a redefined conflict, an effort to include wolves on the landscape, and ultimately, an effort to include humans within a larger ecological landscape. One can expect that in this battle over ideological, social, and geographical margins, wolves will continue to play a role in how humans seek to inscribe their values on the land.

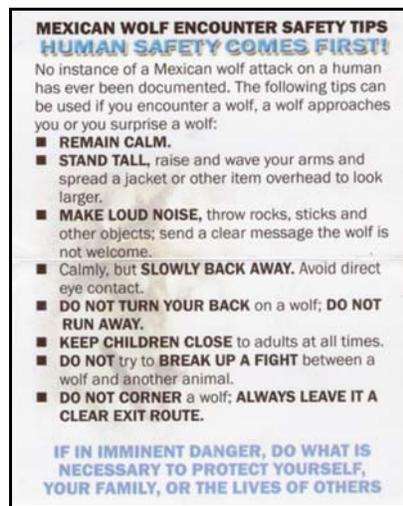
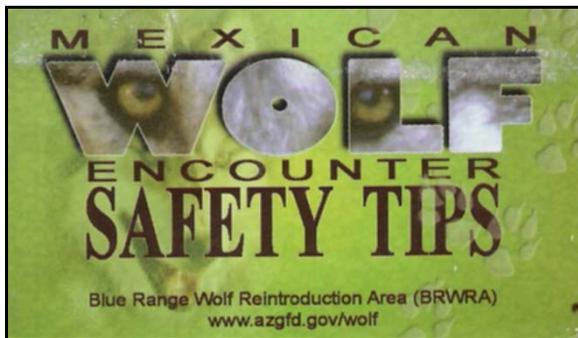


Fig. 6-1. Wallet-sized card (front and back) with safety tips. (Given to author by Shawna Nelson)

Table 6-1. Statistical comparison between Northern Rockies reintroduction (Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem [GYE], Idaho, and Montana) and Southwestern reintroduction (east-central Arizona and west-central New Mexico), as of December 2007 (the table is adapted, expanded, and updated from Gerfin 2006). Updated information for grey wolves in the Northern Rockies can be found online: <http://www.fws.gov/mountainprairie/species/mammals/wolf/annualrpt07/index.html> (accessed 30 May 2008). Updated information for Mexican gray wolves can be found under “Population Statistics,” online: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/> (accessed 30 May 2008).

Gray Wolf (Northern Rockies)	Mexican Gray Wolf (BRWRA)
RANGE no boundaries; though the “core area” for Yellowstone was approximately 3000 mi ²	6,845 mi ² (BRWRA) + 2,500 mi ² (FAIR)
TOTAL REINTRODUCED 66 (1995-96)*	91 (1998-2006)
RECOVERY GOAL 300 (10 “breeding pairs” in each of three locations – Idaho, Montana, and GYE – for three consecutive years)	at least 100
CURRENT POPULATION ESTIMATE 1243 (90 breeding pairs)	52 (4 breeding pairs)
MORTALITIES (TOTAL) N/A†	53
MORTALITIES BY ILLEGAL GUNSHOT N/A	25‡
INITIAL RELEASES OF WOLVES (FROM CANADIAN POPULATIONS) stopped in 1996 (five releases were projected)	INITIAL RELEASES OF WOLVES (FROM CAPTIVITY) still being released (releases were projected to be discontinued by 2002)
DELISTING Rocky Mountain metapopulation delisted as endangered and threatened, 28 March 2008	no current recovery projections or plans for delisting§

*Rocky Mountain recovery exceeded projected expectations; the FWS planned up to five initial releases in Idaho and Yellowstone but only needed two (in 1995 and 1996).

†Mortalities (including those by illegal gunshot) are calculated on a yearly basis for each of the Northern Rockies populations. I have not yet been able to locate a document that includes a total spanning the entire project.

‡In comparison, only eight Mexican wolves died of natural causes (e.g., predation, disease, or asphyxiation).

§The recommendation included in the five-year review of the program proposed 125 wolves for two sequential years as a “population (management) objective,” meaning that as long as there were 125 wolves, as many wolves as necessary could be “taken” for depredation incidents and “unacceptable impacts on native ungulate populations” (MW 2005: ARC-5, no. 11). Such a figure is significant in that it offers an idea of what the various agencies think appropriate, though such targets are not official until a new, vetted EIS is produced (see AMOC 2005: TC-18, which provides a projected estimate based on ungulate biomass).

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND PARTING HOWLS

I think that's the biggest lesson wolves can teach anybody: Shut up and be quiet; get out of your own tunnel and your world and actually take a moment to look at something else that's going to look at you. ...Wolves contemplate you. They don't just look at you, they look right through you.¹

In the opening chapter, I noted that when I explain to friends and acquaintances outside of the field of religious studies that my research focuses on “wolves and religion,” I have often received puzzled expressions followed by the sincere question “What do wolves have to do with religion?” In examining the root conflicts, community expectations, and expressions of values that divide various peoples about wolves, I hope I have provided some answers about the ways in which wolves have been perceived as agents of religious significance. I conclude by revisiting a similar but slightly different question: “What does religion have to do with wolves?” More specifically, what is the potential value of a religionist’s scholarly analysis of both human narratives about wolves, in general, and of the problems related to wolf reintroduction in particular?

Religion as Part of the Dialogue

In chapter one, I began with the question, “What do wolves have to do with religion?” because it is not obvious to many people how religion may factor into human relationships with other animals. I argued that this neglect had much to do with how the word religion has been defined by scholars in the past, which was reflective of broader Western cultural biases and presuppositions about what constituted the most prototypical forms of religion. However, I also noted that such definitions have been increasingly called into question, broadening the scope of

¹Kent Weber, director of Mission:Wolf (interview, 19 July 2007, near Silver Cliff, CO).

academic inquiry and opening up possibilities for more fully appreciating the ways in which people construct worlds of meaning with reference to other animals.

I furthered this analysis in chapter two by broadly identifying some of the conflicting religious narratives and values that divide pro- and anti-wolf factions. In doing so, I underscored how attributions to wolves of “insider” and “outsider” status are intertwined with the economic, social, and religious ways in which people relate to their local landscapes and the natural world as a whole. Wolves have been historically significant sources of symbolic, cosmological, and ethical meaning in this respect, and I argued that the relationships shared between humans and wolves were worth paying closer attention to in order to comprehend the religious values that aid people in ordering and making sense of the world. Excluding wolves from proximity to human communities by killing them, while deeply influenced by socioeconomic factors, also is reflective of a vision of humanity (or divinely favored groups of humans) as entitled to the land’s (God-given) “resources.” Where such views have been prominent, destroying wolves has been variously framed as a mandate, a right, or a responsibility that liberates the land and its commodities for those ordained – or bold, bright, or powerful enough – to make proper use of these raw provisions. In contrast, celebrating wolves as valued members of human and biotic communities tends to rely on a cosmological vision of organic interconnectivity and typically emphasizes human dependence on instead of human dominion over the natural world. To restore wolves to landscapes they once inhabited, in this context, has been frequently understood as an affirmation of respect for nonhuman animals and sometimes conceived as a sacred healing of ecologically wounded lands.

Fleshing out these distinctive views, I offered some particular historical examples in chapter three of the ways wolves have been iconic markers of sacred and profane spaces in the

United States. Particularly critical to wolves' iconic status has been the associations drawn between wolves and wilderness, and the symbolic attributions and values for both that have changed over time. As ecological science increasingly influenced a public reassessment of the worth of predators and their roles in biotic communities, wolves especially were the beneficiaries of a growing interest in conservation generally and the restoration of animal species that had been extirpated from areas they once inhabited particularly. As such, they gained the spotlight as an animal icon that represented a confluence of ecological and spiritual values.

Yet, these values are not floating in the rarified ether that is sometimes associated with religious views. They are worked out on the ground and informed by particular historical and cultural contexts. In chapters four and five, I narrowed my focus to the southwestern United States, where the reintroduction of wolves has been fraught with controversy. One of the reasons I chose the Southwest was to contextualize the broader historical, economic, and geographical issues of previous chapters within a particular region where people have experienced and grappled with the symbolic and real presence of wolves. The influence of institutional religious groups did not figure prominently among those persons with whom I spoke but the values that they expressed about wolves were nonetheless embedded in religious concerns and social lifeways that involved community integrity, land use, and ethical questions regarding human control and manipulation of nature. I highlighted that such concerns were informed by broader historic, scientific, cultural, and spiritual narratives that are not cleanly separated from one another but form interdependent parts of narrative myths that aid people in constructing meaningful, morally charged, social and geographical spaces.

These mythic narratives, social values, and future visions were expressed most explicitly in terms of land use and notions of community space. I identified these larger concerns in chapter

five, and in chapter six I argued that the kinds of topographical boundaries people erect or attempt to eliminate in relation to wolves are manifestations of value-based power struggles over social space. These contestations, I also suggested, are perhaps most strikingly articulated in the pollution-related rhetoric that accompanies the boundary transgressions of wolves, including the notion of “problem wolves.” In short, “ordering” wolves by killing them or restricting their movements and actions reflects larger social and cosmological visions; it is an important example of the ways in which people continue to idealize, construct, and live out worlds of meaning and “good order” with reference to other animals. Wolves, because of their social behaviors as well as the symbolic baggage they carry, have been key boundary-defining animals in this respect.

I intend this research to contribute to the field of religious studies, particularly as an effort to broaden scholarly inquiry into religion as a process of orientation and negotiation with reference to nonhuman animals. Throughout the chapters, I attempted to underscore that religion is not limited to human ideas about and traffic with gods, spirits, divine beings, or invisible forces, even if that is what many people find to be one of its most remarkable or distinguishing features. Religion, as a relational process that orients people in social space, also significantly informs how and why various groups of people interact with nonhuman animals, offering models and narratives of inclusion and exclusion that are oftentimes given coherence in a broader cosmological framework.

Wolves are of particular interest among nonhuman animals because they have evoked such disparate historical reactions and symbolic attributions. They have been magnets for expressions of loathing and devotion, and, in various regions where they are now recovering, they have been iconic animals that illuminate social divisions and conflicting suppositions about the

relationships between humans and the natural world. By highlighting religious values with reference to wolves in particular, I hope I have offered some compelling examples of how claims about human identity, communities, and the natural world are shaped by symbolic and actual negotiations with other animals.

How nonhuman animals are intertwined with personal narratives, interpersonal relationships, and spatial claims, however, is clearly not limited to the discipline of religious studies. Environmental historians, cultural geographers, human ecologists, social scientists, conservation biologists, environmental ethicists, and ecological anthropologists, among others, are all pushing against the edges of their own disciplinary habitats as they attempt to comprehend the complexities of human-nonhuman relationships. I look forward to further interdisciplinary social research that addresses the sources and types of spiritualities, ethics, and religious values that inform on-the-ground relationships with wolves and other species. By examining these deeply held values and their active expression in the public sphere, it is possible to understand some of the reasons that species reintroductions have been so controversial and why there is so much at stake to the people involved. It may also underscore why there have been no quick fixes.

The Test of Time, Narrative, and Community

Based on decades of personal and professional work in Mexico and the southwestern United States, ethnobiologist Gary Paul Nabhan once provocatively argued that, romantic ideals aside, no pre-Columbian cultures became “instant natives” when encountering new habitats in North America (1995: 93). Sustainable human relationships with land that lead to cultural longevity, Nabhan stated, are the product of extended residency in particular places: “My point is

simply this: it may take time for any culture to become truly ‘native,’ if that term is to imply any sensitivity to the ecological constraints of its home ground” (1995: 93; see also Nabhan 1997).²

When people of European ancestry poured into North America, like immigrating human populations before them, they dramatically changed or eliminated the dynamic relationships between many native flora and fauna, often leaving biological havoc in their wake. These changes included the simplification and homogenization of diverse ecological systems, sometimes in favor of only a handful of species utilized for livestock production and agricultural cultivation. “The positive result has been an enormous increase in food production and, thereby, in human population,” wrote historian Alfred Crosby, yet, “The negative results have been the destruction of ecological stability over enormous areas and an increase of erosion that is so great that it amounts to a crime against posterity” (1972: 211). In the Southwest, in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, wolves were one species that directly suffered the consequences of such actions, perhaps more so in that their deaths were not an accidental byproduct but an intentional result of the application of the most potent technologies available to the government at that time.

Considering United States citizens as invasive species may be a difficult idea to consider, but there is a possible upside. The most potent period of wolf eradication efforts and the ecological results of their absence, unlike more abstract or difficult to perceive harbingers of environmental change, have been experienced within the duration of only a few human generations. Based on his research amongst indigenous peoples, human ecologist Fikret Berkes argued that his findings “suggest that the experience of a resource crisis is not only a major, but a

² Citing the Tohono O’odham of southern Arizona with whom he has worked extensively on issues of native seed diversity, Nabhan noted that the O’odham elders practiced selective and intensive care for some plant and animal species without believing they were in control of their desert landscape, thereby creating an actively managed landscape that may, on the face of it, look like an uninhabited wilderness to outsiders. The name the people call themselves, Tohono O’odham, reflects this attitude, for it means “the people belonging to that place” (1995: 97), not, one may note, the place belonging to the people.

necessary ingredient of social learning” (1999: 160, his italics). Reflecting on the tangled transition from invader to native, Berkes wrote,

When humans invade a new and unfamiliar ecosystem, their impact on the environment may be substantial initially. This initial relationship may change as the people develop a knowledge base, learn from their mistakes, and come to terms with the limits of their new environment. Long-settled natives tend to coevolve with their environment, and they often achieve a level of symbiosis... This is not likely to happen over short periods. A knowledge base takes a long time to develop, and practices based on such knowledge even longer (1999: 150).

Another way of saying this might be that place-based stories and religious practices that connect people and their cultures to particular lands in mutually compatible ways are time-dependent.

As Berkes indicates, however, the mere passage of time is not the only factor in adaptive land management regimes. Perhaps more important are the interpretations of environmental experience, for “A conservation ethic may never develop, if the group in question fails to experience a crisis or is unable to interpret it” (Berkes 1999: 161). This is one reason that cultural narratives that encourage respect for one’s landscape and mutual reciprocity with its denizens (what Berkes’ referred to as a “sacred ecology”) may be among the most critical components of sustainable long-term land tenure.

The integration of story and place in a way that fosters environmentally adaptive behavior may be critical in all regions, but according to historian Donald Worster, the western United States is a region that puts in sharp relief

how we are to get a living from a fragile, vulnerable earth without destroying it – or, put otherwise, how we are to lead a sustainable life that does not deplete the natural environment nor communities that depend on it. For this issue the West, because so much of it is ecologically marginal for many human purposes, has represented one of the preeminent laboratories on the planet (Worster 1992: 36).

The drama surrounding wolf reintroductions is related to such an experiment, and is one of the reasons that so much attention is invested in wolf management and recovery.

On a local level, negotiating issues that intersect with wolf recovery necessarily means interacting with new types of people who tell different stories about the land and hold different values than one's own. The persons with whom I spoke during my research reinforced to me in their own ways how negotiating these new stories, and transcending "outsider" labels, can be uncomfortable, painful, and personally challenging. Perhaps the most vital but also the most daunting factor in recovering endangered species is living with and working next to people with whom one may not always, or ever, agree.

Certainly, many of the government biologists with whom I spoke recognized this as a necessary component of the recovery process. Dan Groebner admitted,

We're never going to get people to accept the wolves, probably, or to want them, but if they can trust us – that what we're going to say is what we're going to do – that will keep people from taking matters into their own hands. And that's not easy, that trust thing, and we haven't made a lot of inroads on that (interview, 13 July 2007, Pinetop, AZ).

Especially since 2004, the Mexican wolf recovery team, through the Interagency Field Team, has made a more concerted effort to base their employees directly in or near impacted communities, as well as devote more of their time to individual outreach initiatives. While high employee turnover is common on the recovery team and difficult to avoid as people move up the professional ladder, Groebner stated, "With some people they've gotten to know us ... in a way [that has] personalized the project. ...It's not Washington D.C. running the project. It's people right here that buy their groceries at the same place. ...Even if we're not developing the trust, we're trying to become a part of the community and not manage from a distance" (ibid.)

Not managing from a distance was also very important to Shawna Nelson, who worked as a wolf technician and later as the Mexican wolf project outreach coordinator for the recovery team from 2002-2008. She noted that the most productive part of her job was the time she spent with people on a one-on-one basis. Even something as simple as "sitting down with somebody

over coffee is huge,” she said, and “It makes much greater headway than talking to some nebulous person on the phone” (interview, 12 July 2007, Alpine, AZ). Nelson told me that she was the only person on the recovery team to whom some people would talk. She attributed this to her efforts to become part of the community: “When there’s barbeques, I go. When there are Fourth of July parties, I go. ...I’ve been out in the community so much that people have thought that I was the one that ran this project, and I was like, ‘No, not quite’” (ibid.). Though Nelson also expressed frustration about those involved in the project who were not as community-oriented, her comments indicate that while the Endangered Species Act may set the wheels in motion for wolf recovery, it is local relationships that facilitate its effectiveness. As she put it, “We tell people to go to websites, and they’ll say, ‘That’s by the government and they lie.’ ...But being part of the community – I can call on them and they can call on me” (ibid.).

Amidst the piles of materials written about wolves and in the personal narratives told about them, people will choose to believe some things while dismissing others as tainted or biased. From personal web logs to national newspapers, there is a lot of misinformation about wolves that continues to circulate publicly and probably always will. In the prioritization of information that people find reliable, they are much more likely to place their confidence in good neighbors, friends, family, and those with whom they work and associate closely. In short, they are more likely to believe those people whom they consider trustworthy members of their communities.

Terry Johnson, the nongame director for the Arizona Game and Fish Department, summarized this nicely: “My premise is that when the individual relationships are built up, then the differences of opinion tend to fall away. It’s more difficult to disagree with a friend than it is a distant jerk from Phoenix” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ).³ Such personal

³ When Mexican wolf reintroduction began to be discussed more publicly in the late 1980s, Johnson asked Mike Phillips (the original red wolf recovery leader, Phillips now does work for Ted Turner on conservation management)

connections foster a feeling of community investment and accountability, which are necessary for bridging the gap between implementing the mandates of federal law and more effectively working through the growing pains of social changes.

The first decade of the Mexican wolf recovery project has made it clear that Mexican wolves, despite some of the doubts expressed prior to their release from captivity, can survive in the wild. Thriving there is another matter. This depends on more than a successful initial reintroduction. Because humans are an irrevocable part of the equation, wolf reintroduction forces people at all scales of interest to look more closely at what kinds of relationships are appropriate if long-term residency on the landscape is a priority, and, moreover, what kinds of adaptations are necessary to meet this challenge. As southwestern environmental historian Martha Weisiger observed, “Environmental issues are rarely, if ever, zero sum games, even though the historical players themselves often experience them that way” (Weisiger 2004: 124). Ranchers, government biologists, and environmentalists all share some common ground, ideologically if not physically. In many cases, the interests of these groups converge on protecting habitat, particularly in relation to slowing adverse changes at a broad landscape level caused by road-building and exurban sprawl. No one – and certainly not wolves – in the long run, benefits from further habitat fragmentation.

The presence of Mexican wolves in the Southwest will not solve the difficult problems of how various communities may live productively together, over time, in place. Humans, not wolves, are responsible for that difficult work. However, the reintroduction of wolves has brought people together, many times uncomfortably, who otherwise may never have interacted. For the foreseeable future, the prospect of wolf recovery is likely to challenge various groups and

what the secret to success was for wolf reintroduction. According to Johnson, Phillips’ response was “crystal clear”: “We go to their churches, we play softball on their teams, we marry their daughters, and we go to their socials, and we become part of their community” (interview, 11 June 2007, Phoenix, AZ).

individuals to grapple with their relationships to one another, their local landscapes, and why it might be of value to adjust human lifestyles and livelihoods so that wolves can repopulate their historic homes.

Parting Howls

One of the places I visited during my research was Mission:Wolf, a four-hundred acre wolf educational facility near Silver Cliff, Colorado, which houses and cares for socialized wolves and wolf-dog hybrids. Of the seven different places I toured that kept wolves or wolf-dogs, different educational philosophies were apparent with respect to reintroduction questions, from politically and value-“neutral” to active promotion of wolf recovery. Mission:Wolf seeks “to connect people with nature and foster concern and support for wild habitat protection” as well as expose the “tragedy that occurs when wild animals are confined to life in captivity.”⁴ Despite its remote location, this “captive wolf refuge” hosts thousands of people annually. According to director Kent Weber, “masses of people have heard a little bit about wolves in Yellowstone, but most people are very confused and very disconnected, and the scientists can’t fill this gap because they are so deep in the trees they can’t stand back and see the forest. So that’s the gap that Mission:Wolf tries to fill” (interview, 19 July 2007, near Silver Cliff, CO).

Weber has spent a long time working with wolves and people. His work started in the 1970s when he began taking in wolves that were being kept in what he described as “horrifying” conditions by people who wanted them as pets. Since then, he has dedicated his energy not only to rehabilitating wolves but to changing the ways people think about them. Weber told me that he steered clear of overt politics about wolves. However, a great deal of his work may be

⁴ This quote is taken from a tri-fold Mission:Wolf brochure available on site. Detailed information about Mission:Wolf, its programs, its mission, and its facilities can be found online: <http://www.missionwolf.com> (accessed 7 June 2008).

considered politically influential since he spends several months of each year on the road presenting educational programs to various groups, from school children to wolf supporters to government agency employees.

Weber described some of the many powerful experiences that he has witnessed as people interact with the socialized wolf “ambassadors” with whom he works.⁵ He has watched as contentious meetings about wolf reintroduction come to a standstill when he brings one of Mission:Wolf’s “ambassadors” into the room. At one such meeting in Oregon, Weber told me, a woman who had just concluded an “anti-wolf tirade” was stunned when Weber arrived with a wolf. Once in the room, the wolf proceeded directly to the woman, and after some coaching from Weber about what to do, the woman “looked in the wolf’s eyes, said ‘Oh my god’ and started patting and rubbing it” (interview, 19 July 2007, near Silver Cliff, CO). Weber then gave a presentation about what Americans thought about wolves, and how the people who were angry were mad at politicians not wolves. The professional mediator at the meeting later told him that Weber accomplished more in his forty-five minutes than what the mediator was able to do in two and a half days. Weber commented, “That’s what we found. The wolf brings something tangible, and people stop this bickering” (ibid.). Weber explained that he was convinced “we don’t understand something until we touch it,” and he feared that without such personal experiences wildlife would become more endangered than it already was. As he put it, quoting a

⁵ Weber (and Mission:Wolf) did not advocate for actual physical contact with *wild* wolves, and a tremendous amount of Mission:Wolf’s outreach is dedicated to warning people about trying to keep wolves as pets. A socialized wolf is a wolf that has been reared and in contact with humans from birth. Typically, such wolves accept the presence of particular people throughout their lifetimes, especially their handlers, and will allow them in their enclosures without “testing” them through dominance behavior. A habituated wolf is a very different animal behaviorally. A habituated wolf is a wild-born wolf who has become accustomed to human presence – usually because of refuse or careless food containment – and does not exhibit the same caution or fear typical of wild wolves. Only one human death by wild wolves in North America has been confirmed in the last one hundred years. This death occurred in 2005 in northern Saskatchewan, Canada, and was attributed to wolves that had likely become habituated to an unregulated landfill (Associated Press 2007; cf. McNay 2002; MW 2005: AC-26, TC-22).

fourth grader who had seen one of his programs: “I forget what I hear, I remember what I see, I understand what I touch” (ibid.).

Mission:Wolf is off the beaten track, almost fifteen miles by dirt road (four-wheel drive is “suggested” during winter months), 9300 feet up in the southern Rockies. If people plan on staying the night, a grassy, shrub-studded clearing is available for camping with a first-rate view of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range. As I did for most of the time I spent traveling around the Southwest to interview various people, I took advantage of this cheap bedding alternative. Tucked into my sleeping bag on the night of my visit, I stared up at the ceiling of my temporary shelter and listened to the rapid flapping of my tent fly as an unusually fierce wind whipped up the mountain. Lying there, I contemplated the wolves behind their chain-link fences, most of them adopted by Mission:Wolf after they had been abandoned by people who thought it would be prestigious to have a wolf for a pet, and then found they could not control a wolf’s behavior like they could a dog’s. (The center turns away an average of four requests a week to take in such wolves and wolf-dog crosses.) Like the wind that night, these wolves periodically punctuated the air with their howling. As I listened, it was difficult not to think about what those howls meant, and about the long, strange, and strained relationship humans have had with wolves.

When we talked the next morning, Weber told me that his primary job was to “put himself out of business and tear down the fences” (interview, 19 July 2007, Silver Cliff, CO). In other words, he would like to see Americans reach a point when there was no reason to cage wolves – a time when people co-existed with wild wolves in a landscape in which both were grateful to live. In some ways, the need for facilities like Mission:Wolf represents individual attempts at controlling wild animals gone terribly wrong. According to a brochure I picked up while I was there, captive wolves outnumber wild wolves fifty to one, with “250,000+ wolves and wolf-dog

crosses living in captivity as exotic pets in the US alone.” This alarming statistic was followed by an optimistic note: “Within the next twenty years, we hope to say there are more wild wolves than captive ones in the United States.” It seems to me that such hopes are dependent on a much larger experiment in human control that is taking place in Arizona and New Mexico. In terms of a collective expression of public values, the Mexican wolf recovery project could be considered an attempt to recognize a larger community of life within which humans are embedded. In very tangible terms, it may also indicate how much people are willing to adjust their own practices and lifestyles for an animal that follows its own bearings while moving across the landscape.

The future for Mexican wolves, and all wolves, depends on human willingness to alter or limit certain forms of land use. If Mexican wolves begin to thrive, how to best connect regionally isolated wolf populations will be the next step in the recovery process, with possible international arrangements between the United States and Mexico figuring into the mix. Then, of course, there will be new management hurdles to face. But whatever the breadth of wolf dispersal, the issue of human tolerance, oftentimes formed and measured by the religious work of inclusion and exclusion, will remain.

I was reminded several times by those I interviewed of how close Mexican wolves came to extinction. It struck me then that even talking about wolf recovery in the Southwest – much less reintroducing them – would have been undone if such a fate had occurred. The subspecies would have been a historical footnote, like others of its kind who are now remembered only by their Linnaean classifications. For many persons, the near eradication of wolves in the continental United States facilitated a rethinking of human power over other species and its environmental consequences. Remarkably, wolf recovery may now be a critical means for

people to think about not only what humans demand of the lands on which they depend but what these lands might demand of them.

APPENDIX
A FEW WORDS ABOUT INTERVIEW CONTENT AND METHODS

Introduction

Early in my research, it became clear that there were aspects of wolf reintroduction that could be better understood only by talking to those for whom it mattered most. To complement the wide array of scholarly and popular literature that I reviewed, I conducted person-to-person interviews with thirty-five people, from Palm Desert, California, to Ely, Minnesota. Because the Southwest was my primary region of interest, however, the vast majority (thirty) of my interviews took place in Arizona and New Mexico.

In consultation with Bron Taylor, the chair of my committee, I developed a series of “listening categories”: sets of questions that were intended to offer broad starting points that would lead to more personal discussion of topics related to wolves, their symbolic status, and reintroduction. I also tried, when it was contextually appropriate, to ask interviewees about the types of ethics, spiritualities, or religious views that they saw as important to how wolf reintroductions were framed, by themselves as well as others. The questions I used as reference points during the interviews are provided below, as well as an alphabetized list of the persons with whom I spoke.

In the selection of persons to interview, I began by contacting individuals who had publicly spoken or written about wolves, hoping that such contacts would lead to further suggestions about others who would be willing to discuss wolf reintroduction. Oftentimes, only during or after a meeting with an interviewee were such suggestions made, changing my plans and driving route as I traveled from place to place. This “snowball” technique worked well and led to some interesting places and conversations.

Except for one telephone interview, interviews were conducted in-person at people's homes, places of work, or coffee shops. I also visited six different locations where captive wolves are held – including the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson, Arizona; the California Wolf Center in Julian, California; the International Wolf Center in Ely, Minnesota; the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary in Ramah, New Mexico; Mission:Wolf in Silver Cliff, Colorado; and the Phoenix Zoo. During these visits, I toured the facilities, stayed overnight at three places, and conducted interviews with the director and/or primary wolf handler at five of these locations.

The initial set of interview questions were a guide for me, but as I contacted and interviewed more people, I found myself relying less rigidly on this question set. This was due, in part, to a desire to facilitate a less formal atmosphere in which people felt comfortable discussing such controversial issues. Especially since I was desirous of hearing about how personal values informed views about wolves, this less structured conversation habitat seemed conducive to creating a comfortable listening environment.

Most interviews, and typically the most productive ones, turned into conversations. Two people, who wished to avoid possible public attention, asked me not to directly quote them in the manuscript (and one asked me not to record him/her at all), which I have honored. These conversations were still helpful, especially for nuancing some of the circumstantial and historical background leading up to and beyond the initial wolf reintroductions in the Southwest. I would like to emphasize my deep gratitude to all my interlocutors, who provided me with an educational and oftentimes heartfelt experience that I would not have been privileged to receive without the gift of their time, thoughts, and feelings.

Interviews

Charlie Allen, Winkelman, AZ, 10 July 2007

Sandy Bahr, Phoenix, AZ, 20 July 2007

Doug Bland, 2 April 2008 (telephone interview)

Nancy Biggs-Adams, Tucson, AZ, 9 June 2007

David Brown, Phoenix, AZ, 11 June 2007

Rob Burton, Winkelman, AZ, 10 July 2007

Daisy Mae Cannon, near York, AZ, 7 June 2007

Joe Cannon, near York, AZ, 7 June 2007

Jesse Carey, Reserve, NM, 15 July 2007

Matthew Clark, Tucson, AZ, 8 June 2007

Leyton Cougar, Ramah, NM, 14 July 2007

Jack Diamond, Beaverhead Ranch, NM, 15 July 2007

Darcy Ely, Willcox, AZ, 7 June 2007

Dan Groebner, Pinetop, AZ, 13 July 2007

Don Hoffman, Alpine, AZ, 11 July 2007

Bobbie Holaday, Phoenix, AZ, 12 June 2007

Jan Holder, Tucson, AZ, 6 June 2007

Will Holder, Tucson, AZ, 6 June 2007

Terry Johnson, Phoenix, AZ, 11 June 2007

Shawna Nelson, Alpine, AZ, 12 July 2007

Craig Miller, Tucson, AZ, 8 June 2007

Kim Miller, Julian, CA, 1 June 2007

Dan Moriarty, San Diego, CA, 1 June 2007

John Oakleaf, Alpine, AZ, 12 July 2007

Jean Ossorio, Las Cruces, NM, 5 June 2007

Janice Przybyl, Tucson, AZ, 8 June 2007

Dave Parsons, Albuquerque, NM, 16 July 2007

Karen Riggs, Sunsites, AZ, 6 June 2007

Michael Robinson, Piños Altos, NM, 5 June 2007

Eva Lee Sargent, Tucson, AZ, 8 June 2007

Lori Schmidt, Ely, MN, 26 June 2007

Peter Siminski, Palm Desert, CA, 3 August 2007

Rob Smith, Phoenix, AZ, 11 June 2007

Kent Weber, Sliver Cliff, CO, 19 July 2007

Jeff Williamson, Phoenix, AZ, 11 June 2007

Interview Question Set

All interviewees were first asked to describe the type of work they do and how it relates to wolves.

1. I realize that you have been involved with wolf-related issues for some time. Can you recall your first encounter with wolves (or the first experiences you remember that piqued your interest in wolves)?
2. Have you ever worked with, seen, or heard a wolf in the wild? In captivity?
 - a. What are some of things you remember about this experience (or what emotional responses did this arouse)? How did the wolf (wolves) respond to your presence?
 - b. Are there significant differences that you remember between wild and captive wolves?
3. Have you ever heard a wolf howl?
 - a. If so, how would you describe it?
 - b. If not, how do you imagine it?

4. What led to your first becoming involved in wolf-related discussions/issues?
5. What are some things you hope to accomplish in your professional work? What are some of the challenges (roadblocks) of your professional work?
6. Do you remember when you first found out that wolves were going to be reintroduced to the Southwest?
 - a. What was your initial reaction?
 - b. Has this changed (since 1998)? If so, can you identify the events, persons, or literature that most influenced your views?
7. Education, sound science (e.g., ecosystem integrity, biodiversity), cultural heritage, politics, or economics are often cited by people who oppose or support wolf reintroduction. Which of these do you think is the most important factor in wolf reintroduction?
8. If you were to use just one word to describe wolves, what would that word be? If this word is “wilderness” or “wildness,” what do you think of besides wolves when you hear that word?
9. Some people make strong ethical arguments for or against reintroduction. Which of those ethical arguments have you heard? Which do you find convincing?
10. Some people think that arguments about wolves are related to religious beliefs. Have you seen people make this argument (use religious language to describe wolves)? What do you think of this? Are there any viewpoints that you don’t hear publicly articulated that explain your own views?
11. Have there been any wolf stories (books about wolves) that you’ve found especially meaningful? [If interviewee has heard of or mention Aldo Leopold’s essay “Thinking

Like a Mountain”: When you first heard that story, what did you think about it (how did it make you feel)?]

12. Some people think there is a big difference between wolves as they “really are” and wolves as a symbol (what wolves represent). What do you think that wolves symbolize for most people? What do they symbolize for you, if anything? Do you feel that these symbols interfere with or help wolf reintroduction?
13. As you know, there has been a quite a bit of controversy over wolf reintroduction in the Southwest. What do you consider the strongest arguments (most legitimate) you’ve heard in favor of reintroduction? What are some of the strongest arguments against reintroduction? Where do you see your own view within these others? How do you feel about the people that disagree with you about this?
14. Looking at the way that the wolf reintroduction was (has been) managed, including public meetings/outreach, environmental impact statements, and scientific studies (e.g., Paquet report), what would you say have been the best parts of the process? What have been the most counterproductive, in your view?
15. What concerns have not yet been addressed by the federal (state) government about wolf reintroduction?
16. We both know that wolf reintroduction has been controversial and that some people have been at odds over various issues. Do you feel that mutual understanding between various groups has increased or been undermined since wolves were first reintroduced? What do you see as the most effective on-the-ground programs to ameliorate tensions over wolf reintroduction?
17. Is there an experience that you can point to as a moment when your views of wolves changed significantly?

18. What do you think the future holds for wolves in the Southwest?
 - a. How is the Southwestern reintroduction different from those in other parts of the country (e.g. Yellowstone; North Carolina)?
 - b. What hopes do you have for wolves in the Southwest?

19. Some people who write about wolves or work with them directly suggest that humans have a great deal to learn from wolves. What do you think of that claim?

Additional questions were dependent on the interviewee's professional work and experiences.

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